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Radical food: Nation of Islam and Latter-day Saint culinary ideals (1930-1980)

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RADICAL FOOD: NATION OF ISLAM AND LATTER-DAY SAINT CULINARY IDEALS (1930–1980)

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to Sam, our girls, and my mom. We can do hard things.

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Abstract

This dissertation addresses how from 1930 to 1980 two minority religious groups, the Nation of Islam and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), used food to express their separate and superior status as God's chosen people while at the same time engaging the values of broader American culture.

Outsiders in American religion are, in many ways, consummate insiders seeking to craft an ideal society. Historian R. Laurence Moore has argued that, by inventing themselves through a sense of opposition, religious outsiders contributed substantially to what we think of as American culture. This study of Mormons and Nation Muslims focuses more on the way values from American culture also shaped belief and behavior in two outsider groups. I build on Moore's insight to conclude that, at the same time outsider groups rebelled against what they defined as mainstream American transgressions or faults, they negotiated their own worth in relation to American values that they had quite thoroughly internalized. The processes of cultural assimilation and separation for these outsider religious groups happened simultaneously.

As each group worked out what its separateness and superiority meant in everyday patterns of eating, each developed a cuisine that represented its deeply held religious and cultural priorities. In Mormonism, the greatest value was self-sufficiency, while for the Nation it was health; both groups also used foodways to stress refinement and a sense of chosenness. This study analyzes food habits in their entirety, discussing not only prohibitions, as other scholars do, but also recipes, fasting, food production, and table manners. Major sources include magazine and newspaper articles, speech transcripts, oral history interviews, devotional literature, and cookbooks. Food habits tell how Nation Muslims and Mormons invoked traditional American values but applied those values in their own way in order to be "in but not of" the world.

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Introduction: Discriminating Palates

The examination of food habits that follows began with a question. Why did members of both the Nation of Islam (the Nation) and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the LDS Church), during the mid-twentieth century, justify favorite dishes on the basis of health benefits, encourage members to grow and preserve their own food, fast regularly, fixate on cleanliness and proper table settings during meals, and adhere to unusually strict food prohibitions? Why would such radically different religious and cultural groups share these culinary impulses?

Superficially, these two groups are not the most likely candidates for comparison. There are obvious and important differences between the LDS Church and the Nation. Founded a century apart (the LDS Church in 1830, the Nation of Islam in 1930), these groups were also separated by geographical roots, membership profiles, and theology. Where Latter-day Saints were almost exclusively white at the beginning,[1] Nation Muslims were almost exclusively African American. Where the LDS Church saw itself as reforming American Christianity, the Nation rejected Christianity entirely. LDS theology defined eternal life as an infinity spent in God's presence; Nation theology taught that there was no afterlife. Where they overlapped in time, these two groups occupied opposite ends of the spectrum on race: the Nation rejected the civil rights movement as too conciliatory, and Latter-day Saints rejected civil rights as too radical.

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[1] Newell G. Bringhurst, *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks: The Changing Place of Black People within Mormonism*, Contributions to the Study of Religion 4 (Westport, Conn: Greenwood, 1981), Appendix C.

The Nation saw African Americans as heirs to an ancient, superior race, while many Latter-day Saints of the time saw African Americans as the cursed heirs of Cain.

On the other hand, each group actively set itself apart from other Americans. The Nation read American culture as racist and corrupt, citing the horrible legacy of American slavery and the bitter presence of Jim Crow laws and discrimination. Latter-day Saints also saw mainstream America as corrupt, citing what they saw as Protestant heresies and persecution. Both groups took to heart the Christian New Testament teaching (Romans 12:2) to be "in the world but not of the world," believing they were called to keep themselves purer than the dominant culture.

As a result, Nation Muslims and Latter-day Saints maintained a common wariness about American behavior and cultural influences. Both saw peril in government financial assistance, for example. Both believed their lives should demonstrate a higher way of living than that of mainstream Americans. Their pursuits of good health and self-sufficiency were not intended to make them *like* those mainstream Americans, but *better*. Their priority, albeit practiced differently at their marginalized tables, was to please God and create their own mode of living for God's sake, not to impress their American neighbors. However, in practice, neither did they object to pleasing their American neighbors. As each group worked out what their separateness and superiority meant in everyday patterns of eating, each developed a cuisine that represented its deeply held religious and cultural priorities.

Terms such as "mainstream" or "American" are problematic because American culture consists of myriad peoples and perspectives. From this vantage, it is inaccurate to

claim anything as American or mainstream without specifying what kind of American (Mexican American or New England American) or mainstream for whom (White Southerners or Native peoples in the West). However, both Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims had a conception of mainstream Americans outside of their groups, against whom they distinguished themselves. Latter-day Saints would refer to this category of people as gentiles or "the world." Nation Muslims used the terms White Devils and Slavemasters to identify those different from them. Nation Muslims also distinguished themselves from the practices of other African Americans, in some cases even encouraging members to follow the examples of White Devils. Therefore, in an important sense, both groups worked to be separate to other Americans, diverse as that category might actually be.

But of course Nation Muslims and Latter-day Saints were not making up something called mainstream American culture. Powerful American entities, including but not limited to advertisers, publishing houses, and Hollywood, have conveyed attitudes of what was American. Scholarly explorations such as Suellen Hoy's *Chasing Dirt: The American Pursuit of Cleanliness* and Leslie Brenner's *American Appetite: The Coming of Age of a National Cuisine,* both cited in this dissertation, find it necessary to identify certain attitudes as American in order to promote historical understanding. While the truth is that American culture is diverse racially, economically, geographically, and socially, there is a sufficient sense of a mainstream culture that scholars do talk about American trends and values. In this dissertation, I refer to values and practices as

American not because "American" is a homogenous entity, but as a reference for popular conceptions of dominant cultural forces.

Both the Nation of Islam and the LDS Church were born and developed in the American context. One of their greatest similarities is the fact that they are both quintessentially American religions, founded by uneducated men from unknown families who claimed for themselves the identity of prophet. These men taught that, through proper worship and deportment, anyone could change his or her status in relation to God and other people. Focusing his analysis on creed, literary critic Harold Bloom argued that quintessentially American religions earn that designation through their emphasis on the individual and a related Gnostic spirituality.[2] Certainly individualism can account for the rise of these two prophets. But because my work looks not just at creed, but at cult and code as well, it can expand scholarly understandings of the way outsider religions are intrinsically American. While there were individualistic tenets inherent in Nation and LDS theologies, the following examination of foodways shows the groups were also communitarian, dedicated to taking care of their own. Even this communal-mindedness is American when framed, as both groups did it, in terms of self-sufficiency.

Scholars exploring the food habits of these two groups have looked almost exclusively at prohibitions and focused their analyses on identity and boundary maintenance. As a result, until now the Nation's interpretation of black American racial identity has been seen as the primary influence on their food habits. Observers have

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[2] Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992); Jay P. Dolan, "In Whose God Do We Trust?," *New York Times*, May 10, 1992, http://www.nytimes.com/books/98/11/01/specials/bloom-religion.html.

assumed that the Word of Wisdom (the LDS health code) most influenced what Latter-day Saints ate and that prohibitions made them separate from other Americans. Yet this is not solely how Nation or LDS members themselves experienced their foodways. On the contrary, I show how both groups used food to improve their social standing with other Americans, not simply to distinguish themselves from them. American middle-class ideals were sufficiently compelling and authoritative that LDS and early Nation leaders invoked and repurposed them for their projects instead of rejecting them outright.

Outsiders in American religion are, in many ways, consummate insiders—independent idealists seeking to craft an ideal society, as were the Puritans and the Founding Fathers. These idealists typically set themselves apart. Historian R. Laurence Moore argued that "one way of becoming American was to invent oneself out of a sense of opposition."[3] As this quotation suggests, Moore argued that dissent and opposition have been the key to "liveliness in American religion,"[4] and he emphasized the role of religious outsiders in contributing to American culture. I focus more on the way values from American culture also shaped belief and behavior in two outsider groups. I build on Moore's insight to conclude that, at the same time outsider groups rebelled against what they defined as mainstream American transgressions or faults, they negotiated their own success and worth in relation to such values that had been so internalized from the dominant culture as to be inescapable. Foodways are a useful, and until now incompletely used, lens through which we can see how these two traditions reflected their American

[3] R. Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 45.
[4] Ibid., 46.

context. This dissertation explores at length the ways these rebel religious movements absorbed key elements of the culture they both rejected and accepted, delineating a process of simultaneous assimilation and separation that might be used more broadly for future analysis of new religious movements in America. Under the overarching rubric of assimilation and separation, my argument focuses on three main areas—sacred genealogy, health, and self-sufficiency—which together demonstrate the processes by which these outsider religious groups employed mainstream American values as they defined themselves as distinct from that dominant culture. Before describing assimilation and the related arguments, however, we must first understand the historical context of food in both groups.

Foodways in the Nation of Islam and the LDS Church, 1930–1980

Wallace Fard, a Detroit silk peddler who founded the Nation of Islam and led it from 1930 to 1934, first elaborated new foodways for the Nation. In peddling his wares door to door, Fard wrangled invitations to meals. He ate everything offered to him, but after the meal would begin to explain how his hosts could eat for a healthier and more spiritually fulfilling life.[5] Fard only had a few years to establish his movement before he was implicated and arrested for James Smith's murder on November 20, 1932. Fard was innocent and likely did not even know the real murderer, Robert Harris. But the uproar that followed Fard's arrest spooked authorities and they exiled him from Detroit upon his release. Fard continued to instruct his top disciple, Elijah Muhammad, in secret until he

[5] Nora L. Rubel, "The Nation of Islam," in *Introduction to New and Alternative Religions in America*, ed. Eugene V. Gallagher and W. Michael Ashcraft (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 2006), 5:4.

was discovered and arrested on May 25, 1933, on charges of disturbing the peace. Fard and Muhammad met at least one more time in Chicago, before Fard was arrested again and left Elijah Muhammad for good in June 1934.[6] After Fard's departure, Elijah Muhammad became the Nation's leader. Elijah Muhammad (born Elijah Poole)[7] based his work firmly on what Fard had taught. As Muhammad expanded the organization, he continually referred to Fard's teaching as the organization's foundation. He taught that Fard had been God incarnate, sent to enlighten members of the black race, and that Elijah himself was Fard's prophet. Thus when Elijah Muhammad warned against tobacco, pork, and alcohol, or when he taught members to eat only one meal per day, he was invoking God's authority. Elijah Muhammad continued to teach Fard's food guidelines for decades before finally publishing the first volume of *How to Eat to Live* in 1967. *How to Eat to Live* explains in two slender volumes the key food doctrines of the divine Fard and his American prophet. A statement against swine provides a sense for the several motivations at play for every tenet: "Please, for our health's sake, stop eating it; for our beauty's sake, stop eating it; for our obedience to God and His laws against this flesh, stop eating it; for a longer life, stop eating it and for the sake of modesty, stop eating it."[8] As this quotation suggests, food habits convey numerous and potent layers of meaning. Nation foodways certainly did counter a slave identity, as scholars have noted, but they did much more

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[6] Claude Andrew Clegg, *An Original Man: The Life and Times of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: Macmillan, 1998), 30–36.

[7] When members joined the nation, they replaced their surnames with an X, which represented "a psychological break with the 'blind, deaf, and dumb' previous existence of the convert and a submergence into the collective identity of the Nation of Islam and knowledge of self and others. In the eyes of the believers, the name change is ultimately a liberating experience akin to an emancipation from slavery." Believers expected the X to be replaced by an Arabic surname like Muhammad or Sharrieff, though some waited years for this change. Ibid., 27–28.

[8] Elijah Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 1* (Phoenix: Secretarius INC, 1967), 17.

than that. Here Muhammad focused first on health. Throughout his discourses he emphasized the relationship between health and diet, drawing on American understandings of nutrition science. Muhammad often spoke of the beauty that resulted from good health. He also mentioned obedience to God, which he seldom did in his writing about food, supporting in this case the thesis of religious studies scholar Edward Curtis that the Nation was not primarily a political organization, but a religious one:

> NOI members may have held political positions about integration, Vietnam, and white supremacy, and they may have been looking for solutions to their political and social problems. But what made them cohere, what made them a movement, was their devotion to a comprehensive religious system. . . . They practiced their religion not only by reciting their prayers and their creeds but also by paying attention to what they ate, how they dressed, and what music they listened to. For NOI practitioners, Islam was not only a theology but also a system of ritualized practices that brought them what they described as dignity, hope, civilization, self-determination, pride, peace, security and salvation.[9]

Muhammad's mention of obedience to God as a reason to avoid pork underscores the fact that this was a religion and that food commandments mattered because they were from God. Ritualized practices may have been politically savvy in promoting dignity, hope, and security, but Nation Muslims did experience them as religious. Longer life was another aspect of health that Muhammad frequently invoked regarding foodways, and one with theological ramifications since this life was all one had (he rejected what he called the Christian "pie in the sky" afterlife). Modesty included modesty in dress, but Muhammad typically spoke of modesty in terms of deportment. He believed that what you ate directly influenced how you behaved, which made pork particularly menacing because pigs, according to him, were slovenly, filthy, and without restraint. This one

[9] Edward E. Curtis, *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam, 1960–1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 6.

statement against eating pork expresses many of Nation Muslims' highest priorities, to become God's healthy, long-living, attractive, contributing people.

While Fard and Muhammad shaped foodways for the Nation, the earliest attempts at regulating LDS foodways were in the Doctrine and Covenants, a canonized book of Latter-day Saint scripture largely drawn from the writings and revelations of Church founder Joseph Smith Jr. In 1833, Smith reported a revelation about diet and health, ultimately titled the "Word of Wisdom." The Word of Wisdom encouraged eating fruits, vegetables, and grains in season; limiting meat intake; avoiding hard alcohol; and eschewing "hot drinks"—which Saints understood to mean coffee and tea. Despite Church leaders' efforts to encourage compliance with the Word of Wisdom, many Latter-day Saints for the next hundred years considered the health code to be optional advice. But by 1933 the official Church *General Handbook of Instructions* stated a minimum standard of obedience to this code for members to qualify for temple attendance, the marker of full Church participation.[10] Members who used tobacco or drank tea, coffee, or any kind of alcohol were unworthy to participate in the temple, the crowning occasion of LDS worship.

The Church Welfare Program, officially launched in 1936, strongly shaped LDS foodways. First, it established a number of Church-owned farms and ranches. The program required members to work on and maintain these collective food sources to provide for their fellows in time of need. The program also strongly encouraged members

[10] Observing Word of Wisdom prohibitions was a temple requirement in 1921, but it was more regularly adhered to after it was put in the handbook in 1933. Thomas G. Alexander, "The Word of Wisdom: From Principle to Requirement," *Dialogue* 14, no. 3 (Autumn 1981): 82; Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-Day Saints, 1890–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 258–71.

toward self-sufficiency. The major components of self-sufficiency that influenced food habits were growing your own food, gathering and maintaining a two-year supply of food, and frugality. As a result, the LDS larder contained home-canned fruits and vegetables, items with a long shelf life (such as powdered milk and shortening), and wheat—lots and lots of wheat. Wheat satisfied members' ideological yearnings to eat in a way that promoted both self-sufficiency and good health—self-sufficiency because it stored and nourished well as emergency food, and health because members saw whole-wheat flour as a healthier alternative to all-purpose flour.

For the most part, the descriptions of food habits in this dissertation look to the centers of power for both of these traditions: the urban centers of Detroit, New York, and Chicago for the Nation; and the "Mormon Corridor" (Utah, Idaho, Nevada, and Arizona) for the Latter-day Saints.[11] This dissertation focuses on the period between 1930 and 1980, with some additional attention to earlier events in Latter-day Saint history. The people I interviewed for this project look back to the 1960s and 1970s, and the majority of primary sources I examine come from those years. By 1980, changes brewing in the Nation of Islam affected food habits for many members. Elijah Muhammad died on February 25, 1975, and the son who succeeded him, Wallace D. Muhammad, began to change organizational practices to bring the movement more in line with the mainstream vision of global Sunni Islam. He also changed the name of the group to the World Community of Al-Islam in the West, which later became the American Society of Muslims. Louis Abdul Farrakhan defected from Wallace D. Muhammad's organization in

[11] For more on the Mormon Corridor, see Ethan R. Yorgason, *Transformation of the Mormon Culture Region* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

1977, forming another organization called the Nation of Islam, which was based on a return to the doctrine of Elijah Muhammad.[12] The food habits of those who did not follow Farrakhan came to resemble a more mainstream vision of Islamic practice.

Food as Identity: Separation and Assimilation

Nation and LDS foodways are conventionally framed in terms of identity formation, showing how groups used foodways to reject the mainstream culture and cultivate distinctive identities for themselves (see below). I propose that even efforts at distinctiveness employed common tools from the broader culture. Instead of focusing on purely distinctive identity formation, my project reveals an agenda of belonging that expands and complicates familiar narratives. As the following literature review suggests, separation is a factor, but food is just as often a tool of assimilation.

Food and Separation

Scholars to date have emphasized how Nation foodways foster a new racial identity, but this was not generally how participants explained them. Certainly foodways were among the many aspects of the movement that encouraged in adherents a new sense of identity. C. Eric Lincoln's work has focused on African identity as key to the Nation enterprise, and in an important sense this was true. The Nation movement had been influenced by the work of Marcus Garvey and Noble Drew Ali, and the Nation benefited from a void left after Garvey was deported in 1927 and Ali died in 1929. Their

[12] Clifton E. Marsh, *From Black Muslims to Muslims: The Resurrection, Transformation, and Change of the Lost-Found Nation of Islam in America, 1930–1995*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1996), 71–73.

movements focused on reclaiming the African self.[13] In fact, the introduction to *The Muslim Recipe Book*[14] (which this dissertation will examine in chapter 1) explains that author Reda Khalifah included Muhammad's Twelve Point Program in the cookbook because "[it] is definitely something that we, as African people, should constantly be striving to fulfill, which is the only way to acquire real freedom."[15]

Algernon Austin countered Lincoln's assumption with evidence of Nation ambitions toward a broader Asian identity, noting that "members of the Nation of Islam were still given Arabic names, studied Arabic, viewed Mecca as their original home, and were forbidden to wear African clothing. The Nation always identified more strongly with Islamic countries in particular than with sub-Saharan African countries in general."[16] Edward E. Curtis IV,[17] on the other hand, argued that an over-emphasis on racial identity had obscured the movement's character as a genuine religion. Instead of Africanization, or Middle Eastern identification, Curtis explained activity in the Nation as a process of Islamization that sought to "civilize" the black body. To the multifaceted complex of influences and motivations with which theorists of the Nation have wrestled, Curtis proposed an elegant solution. He argued that instead of rejecting black middle-class ideals, as those donning African clothing and afros were doing,

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[13] C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*, 3rd ed. (1961; repr., Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 22, 25, 27.
[14] Reda Faard Khalifah, *The Muslim Recipe Book: Recipes for Muslim Girls Training & General Civilization Class (MGT/GCC) of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad* (Charlotte, N.C.: United Brothers Communication Systems, 1995), 6.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Algernon Austin, *Achieving Blackness: Race, Black Nationalism, and Afrocentrism in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 45.
[17] Curtis, *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam, 1960–1975*; Edward E. Curtis, "Islamizing the Black Body: Ritual and Power in Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam," *Religion and American Culture* 12, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 167–96.

> [The Nation] appropriated these values within a new Islamic matrix. . . . Put in terms of a simple semiotic exercise: the body was a sign. NOI members separated the signifier—the civilizing of the body—from what was normally signified—a capitulation to the values, norms, and beliefs of the middle class. The old signifier now pointed toward a new signified: the Islamized black body.[18]

Curtis is right that bodies were central to the Nation's religion-making and that the "civilization" or taming of those bodies was a crucial focus of Nation praxis. The Islamic matrix allowed members to convert outwardly white behaviors into markers of Islamization. Foodways confirm the importance of Islamization to their enterprise. Nation foodways did not disprove Curtis's insight that members could behave in the same ways as middle-class whites and have that behavior still mean a rejection of the white middle class and an Islamization of themselves. Recipes, for example, demonstrated the extent to which the Islamic signifier allowed for movement toward an Islamic identity despite continuities in cuisine with mainstream America (see chapter 1). Islamization also explained why Nation Muslims could fully experience a renewed sense of identity at the same time their food habits did not actually match those of Middle Eastern Arabs or African Muslims. My work focuses on the power of this continuity—how American middle-class ideals were sufficiently compelling and authoritative that Nation Muslims would invoke and repurpose them for their project instead of rejecting them outright.

Perhaps because Latter-day Saints' dining habits so closely resembled those of middle America, or perhaps because they have been analyzed almost exclusively in terms

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[18] Curtis, *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam, 1960–1975*, 129.

of prohibitions,[19] far less has been written about the meaning of food in Mormonism. Students of the religion have generally accepted Thomas Alexander's suggestion that the Word of Wisdom rose in importance as a separatist boundary marker once the community formally abandoned the practice of plural marriage:

> Although it was undoubtedly not consciously so conceived, the reinterpretation of members' responsibilities under the Word of Wisdom . . . provided a new and increasingly more significant boundary. Paradoxically, perhaps, the boundary created by insisting on strict abstinence from liquor brought increased credibility with Evangelical Protestants, the one group most antagonistic to Mormons, since they had been pressing for prohibition since the late nineteenth century. It did, however, create a boundary with an increasingly secular and hedonistic American society and with religious groups that did not adopt Evangelical attitudes toward liquor and tobacco.[20]

Alexander suggests that when polygamy was no longer available as a marker of difference, leaders began to emphasize the Word of Wisdom as an essential aspect of Latter-day Saint identity. In this he is following the work of Jan Shipps, who argued that, while nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint identity did not rest on the Word of Wisdom, twentieth-century Mormonism began to rely upon it as a tool of identity formation. The official abandonment of polygamy in 1890 "signaled the beginning of the end of the extraordinary situation wherein Latter-day Saints had lived their lives in sacred space and

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[19] Lester E. Bush Jr., "The Word of Wisdom in Early Nineteenth-Century Perspective," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 14, no. 3 (Autumn 1981): 46–65; Steven C. Harper, *The Word of Wisdom* (Orem, Utah: Millennial Press, 2007); Alexander, "The Word of Wisdom: From Principle to Requirement"; Paul H. Peterson, "An Historical Analysis of the Word of Wisdom" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1972).

[20] Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 258.

sacred time." In the place of community polygamy, the Word of Wisdom and other individual practices like tithing arose to redefine what it meant to be a Latter-day Saint.[21]

We will see in the following section on assimilation that the traditional approach of regarding LDS foodways only as tools of separation is not fully adequate, but it is worth noting that the question of separation for Latter-day Saints is complicated by the issue of race. Race was a crucial difference between the Nation and the LDS Church, and each group's relationship to whiteness is important to understanding the marginalization of both groups. Paul Reeve has shown how Latter-day Saints in the nineteenth century were racially "otherized," repeatedly depicted as not-white by white Protestants.[22] Latter-day Saints always considered themselves "real" Americans, but it was not until the mid-twentieth century that it appeared they might have a chance at being accepted as such. Prejudice against members of the almost exclusively African American Nation, on the other hand, was still extreme in the twentieth century. Where Latter-day Saints could choose whether to divulge their religious affiliation, African Americans were usually instantly recognizable as black. The FBI kept a close watch on the Nation, and media coverage of the group—including the PBS documentary *The Hate That Hate Produced* and C. Eric Lincoln's alarmist depictions of their ideology—created additional levels of prejudice against Nation Muslims.[23] Perhaps the fact that Nation Muslims received less acceptance from mainstream America explains why their foodways were more unusual than LDS habits; level of rejection correlated with need for distinction. The fact that both

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[21] Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 125–26, 128.
[22] W. Paul Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).
[23] Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*.

groups were rejected by mainstream America does seem to explain why they would want to be distinct. The narratives here suggest that a protective move for groups treated as different and inferior is to accept the separate status while working to disprove the "inferior" position. Calling on shared values is an effective way to prove the inferiority claim false. Perhaps, then, Nation regulations were more demanding because the division against them was greater, so they had more to do in order to prove themselves not inferior. In other words, there is a correlation between the extreme nature of the mainstream's rejection of a minority group and the extreme nature of the minority group's subsequent drive to make itself distinctive. On the other hand, perhaps the more strict regulations were simply convenient. Agieb Bilal, former Assistant National Secretary to the Nation of Islam, told me in an interview that eating once a day made economic sense. "You are poor, first of all, so you shouldn't be eating just to be eating."[24] Most frequently, Muhammad and Nation Muslims talked about eating once a day as good for health, but they also acknowledged that it made economic sense.

Food and Assimilation

In his study of Latter-day Saints, Catholics, Jews, Christian sectarians, and black churches, R. Laurence Moore first argued that "outsiders" in American culture were in many ways consummately American. For example, he wrote of Latter-day Saints: "In defining themselves as being apart from the mainstream, Latter-day Saints were in fact laying their claim to it. By declaring themselves outsiders, they were moving to the

[24] Agieb Bilal, interview by Kate Holbrook, January 17, 2014.

center."[25] Food habits further demonstrate this phenomenon. Others have noted the affinities between the Nation of Islam and American culture and the LDS Church and American culture, respectively. For example, Swedish scholar of comparative religion Mattias Gardell has remarked:

> Observed from a perspective of civilizing theory, the Nation of Islam is a movement of *auto civilization* that ultimately will adjust a segment of the African American community to the norms of the dominant culture of American society. Central to this argument is the notion that the Nation, un-American or even anti-American as it might seem, is fundamentally a far more genuine American movement than is generally recognized. The call for a return to the original way of life proves on examination to be rather identical with the American way of life. The ideals preached are generally compatible with those of conservative, white, Protestant, middle-class Americans . . . They are nonsmoking, nondrinking, clean-living moralists who shun sexual promiscuity, excessive partying, and decadent behavior.[26]

Gardell's evidence that the Nation's vision of an original way of life was identical with conceptions of the American way of life relies on behaviors that the Nation and conservative, white Protestants (and Latter-day Saints) have in common: they don't smoke, they don't drink, and they prize chastity and clean behavior. The Nation's original way of life was not identical with the American way of life—for one thing Nation Muslims were more chaste, more temperate, more self-restrained than most Americans—but Gardell is correct that ideals preached are generally compatible with those of conservative, white, Protestant, middle-class Americans. My study of foodways

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[25] Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans*, 46.

[26] Mattias Gardell, *In the Name of Elijah Muhammad: Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996), 346–47. Also, "In the forty-five years following its birth in Depression-era Detroit, the Nation of Islam promoted an ideal of rigorous self-improvement that emphasized healthy diet, complete sobriety, strict discipline, stable and loving family structures, the pursuit of education, frugal living, and economic self-sufficiency." Michael Muhammad Knight, *Why I Am a Five Percenter* (New York: Penguin, 2011), 67–68.

contributes additional American values to his list, including chosenness, a nutrition-science approach to health, and self-sufficiency. In its rejection of Christianity, holidays, and political rhetoric in the United States, the Nation certainly did seem un- or anti-American. But as Gardell suggests, their behavioral ideals often mirrored those of the American middle class. In fact, Nation Muslims sought to be better at living those values than other Americans.

A similar process worked among Latter-day Saints. Historian Claudia Bushman observes,

> This one-time outlaw sect has accommodated in many respects to the standard norms of the United States, allowing one recent commentator to call Mormons "quintessentially American," even as they seem strange and distant to others. In this dance of opposites, the Church has moved closer to and then farther away from American society, emphasizing areas attractive to the mainstream, while guarding and pointing out the Church's effort to live out ancient, scriptural injunctions in modern society.[27]

By the "outlaw sect," Bushman refers to the early Saints who practiced plural marriage and favored theocratic government. Mobs ran them out of Missouri, Ohio, and Illinois until they finally settled in what became Utah Territory to establish their own religious kingdom separate from the United States. The "ancient scriptural injunctions" they still lived out in the twentieth century included tithing and fasting, disciplines that, while

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[27] Claudia L. Bushman, *Contemporary Mormonism: Latter-day Saints in Modern America* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 6. Also, Jan Shipps argued that it was the contrast between clean-cut Latter-day Saints and hippies during the late sixties and early seventies that cemented Latter-day Saints' image as "100 percent super-American." According to Shipps, it was "not at all uncommon to hear, in academic presentations at American studies meetings, that Mormons are 'more American than the Americans.'" In his foreword to *Mormons and the American Experience*, for example, Martin Marty wrote, "Mormons are very American, sometimes super-American." Jan Shipps, *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years Among the Mormons* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 100; Martin E. Marty, foreword to *Mormons and the American Experience*, by Klaus J. Hansen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), xiii. See also J. B. Haws, *The Mormon Image in the American Mind: Fifty Years of Public Perception* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 36.

rigorous, were not remotely as strange as the plural marriage and communal financial experiments they pursued during the nineteenth century. Both groups exhibited conflicting impulses to succeed according to the rules of broader society while at the same time maintaining some distance from that society. These conflicting impulses met in their shared foodways. For example, fasting set them apart from other citizens even while both groups invoked in fasting an American understanding of themselves as chosen. Both groups idealized growing and preserving their own food to be independent of America's industrial food systems but praised (American) self-sufficiency as they did so.

However, in practice, the Word of Wisdom did not markedly distinguish Latter-day Saints from other American religious groups the way that the practice of polygamy had. Latter-day Saint emphasis on whole grains, teetotalism, and abstinence from stimulants placed them squarely within evangelical Protestant reforms of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Instead of marking Latter-day Saints as radically different, renewed emphasis on the Word of Wisdom served to establish them as respectable Americans who possessed the same capacity for self-control as their Protestant neighbors. Though Latter-day Saints by the mid-twentieth century were no longer popularly demonized as wanton participants in an amoral polygamy, they still sought to defeat negative stereotypes.[28] Adherence to the Word of Wisdom proved their capacity for physical restraint.

[28] Haws, *The Mormon Image in the American Mind*.

Although little has been written about twentieth-century LDS foodways, several scholars have identified and analyzed patterns of LDS assimilation with American culture. The most prominent and prolific of these, sociologist Armand Mauss, reviewed the "Americanization" thesis others had developed, in which the Church pursued "a deliberate policy of assimilation with American society" during the first half of the twentieth century. This was a trajectory that social theorists Ernst Troeltsch and Max Weber would have predicted (how a disreputable sect becomes a respectable church).[29] However, Mauss added in a corrective: that since the mid-twentieth century the LDS Church had reversed course to recover some of its previous distinctiveness: "Faced with cultural assimilation, Mormons have felt the need since the sixties to reach ever more deeply into their bag of cultural peculiarities to find either symbolic or actual traits that will help them mark their subcultural boundaries and thus their very identity as a special people."[30] Mauss considered this phenomenon distinctive; he labeled it "retrenchment."[31] "Growth and prosperity depend upon finding and maintaining an optimum level of tension on a continuum between disrepute and respectability," he concluded.[32]

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[29] Armand L. Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), ix–x.
[30] Ibid., 77.
[31] Mauss intentionally used a word that would recall earlier LDS history. In late 1869 and early 1870, Brigham Young and Mary Isabella Horne initiated a Church-wide reform that focused primarily on food and dress. Latter-day Saints were to approach these tasks with simplicity and practicality, preserving themselves from outside influence that led to extravagance and waste. Retrenchment reinforced notions of Latter-day Saint peculiarity because it was intended to stop Latter-day Saints from participating in lavish, worldly endeavors. Jill Mulvay Derr et al., eds., *Selected Relief Society Documents, 1842–1892* (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2016).
[32] Armand L. Mauss, "Rethinking Retrenchment: Course Corrections in the Ongoing Campaign for Respectability," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 44, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 2. Mauss acknowledged other theorists as reaching a similar conclusion, including economist Laurence C. Iannaccone, "A Formal Model of Church and Sect," *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (Supplement) (1988): S241–68; Iannaccone, "Sacrifice and Stigma: Reducing Free-Riding in Cults, Communes, and Other Collectives,"

Mauss should be credited with recognizing that the "Americanization" process can proceed in fits and starts and even double back on itself. But, in general, he treated assimilation and retrenchment as monolithic strategies. That is, either the LDS Church was assimilating or it was retrenching. In this dissertation I explore ways that both processes were present simultaneously. Mauss, in a later corrective, emphasized a duality in the processes of retrenchment and assimilation, whereby external efforts at assimilation did not mirror many of the internal assumptions about the meaning of membership. Members and leaders both made efforts toward acceptability while harboring internal (and less amenable to outsiders) beliefs about their particularity. LDS membership could be two things at once—a way of life that was palatable to other Americans coexisting with a belief that Mormonism was utterly distinctive. As Mauss put it,

> Externally, the church continues to seek respectability and acceptance as one Christian religion among others. Members will recognize, however, that what we tell ourselves internally is that there is only *one* true church, and ours is it! We continue to cherish our peculiarities as ways of emphasizing that exclusive claim, even as we cringe over what outsiders make of those peculiarities and try to gloss over them whenever we are confronted with them.[33]

This phenomenon of negotiating boundaries and tensions between the religious movement and its host society is clearly at play in the foodways of these two apparently quite distinct outsider religious movements. My chapter 3, "Eating with Each Other," reviews how the table norms of each group conveyed an image of consummate

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Journal of Political Economy 100, no. 2 (1992): 271–92; Iannaccone, "Why Strict Churches Are Strong," *American Journal of Sociology* 99 (1994): 1180–211. See also sociologists Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

[33] Mauss, "Rethinking Retrenchment: Course Corrections in the Ongoing Campaign for Respectability," 3.

refinement, according to their own standards. Both groups took American standards of cleanliness to an extreme, for example. But even as Nation Muslims carefully set their tables, they did so differently than other Americans, by placing fork on the right and spoon on the left. The staging of communal meals worked against stereotypes of African Americans as subhuman and Latter-day Saints as rural hicks.

This dissertation shows how, for Nation Muslims and Latter-day Saints in the mid-twentieth century, retrenchment and assimilation were frequent companions in foodways. In fact, it firmly disputes old models of food habits as a simple means of boundary maintenance. Boundaries can be highly porous, an observation that proved especially true in twentieth-century America because people regularly interacted with those outside of their religious communities at the market, at work, or at home while watching television. These interactions and relationships required frequent negotiation, not least because both of these groups were aggressive proselytizers. Elijah Muhammad wanted more African Americans to join his movement. Therefore, I conclude that, instead of keeping people separate, prohibitions marked a change in personal habits, which signified commitment to the Nation. Latter-day Saints also wanted new members to join them, so prohibitions for them also marked commitment instead of keeping members entirely separate from outsiders.

Many arguments about food prohibitions and boundary maintenance have focused on intermarriage. In *Purity and Danger*, anthropologist Mary Douglas famously asserted

that categories of food represent categories of people.[34] She explained that for ancient and native peoples, to honor food categories was to protect their communities against outside influences they perceived as dangerous. Later, she refined her arguments from *Purity and Danger* but still insisted on this linkage between forbidden food and mixing peoples:

> An Israelite who betrothed a foreigner might have been liable to be offered a feast of pork. By these stages it comes plausibly to represent the utterly disapproved form of sexual mating and to carry all the odium that this implies. We now can trace a general analogy between the food rules and the other rules against mixtures.[35]

Douglas's work might be relevant for analyzing some twentieth century groups. For example, in a film about the creation of post-Holocaust Hasidic communities in the United States, Professor Samuel Heilman spoke about food and boundary maintenance in relation to Hasidic peoples' desire to be separate:

> These Hasidim say: "Look we don't want to invite you to our house, because we don't want to be invited to your house. Not because we have anything against you. We don't eat the same food. We don't have anything against you personally, we have things against you culturally. We don't want to share in your way of life. We view it as threatening and dangerous."[36]

In this view, the safe path is cordoned off. Cultural mixing between Hasidim in America and other Americans led to pollution and defection. But this link between forbidden food and forbidden relationships breaks down with Nation Muslims and Latter-day Saints. Elijah Muhammad did not want African Americans and whites to intermarry, but Nation foodways did not accomplish that goal. If anything, prohibitions against pork and sweet

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[34] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (1966; repr., New York: Routledge & K. Paul, 1978), 41–57.
[35] Mary Douglas, "Deciphering a Meal," in *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1975), 52.
[36] Oren Rudavsky and Menachem Daum, *A Life Apart: Hasidism in America*, documentary (EMI UNART, 1997), http://www.pbs.org/alifeapart/index.html.

potatoes separated the Nation's African Americans from other African Americans. The following pages show how food practices for Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims were a continuous intake of external values, techniques, and innovations mediated through internal priorities and the practices they forged.

Scholars want religion to be rational, but it often is not. Perhaps this is what Mary Douglas was getting at in an interview toward the end of her life. She said that she had originally wanted *Purity and Danger* to take a behavioral-intellectualist approach, but both she and her readers had overemphasized the cognitive aspect. She treated the forbidden foods in Leviticus "as good to think with, but they should have been good for interacting with other people and making an understanding of why we're interacting and what we're doing."[37] This dissertation takes up that charge. How did participants understand what they were doing with food? How did food affect their interactions with each other and with friends and neighbors outside their communities? I explore both official messages from group leadership and everyday food practices of participants in an effort to understand what the foodways meant in their religious, social, and cultural contexts. Although these two outsider religious groups differed in significant ways, this study provides insight into the daily theologizing that members of both groups performed.

[37] Mary Douglas, interview by Alan Macfarlane, February 26, 2006, http://www.alanmacfarlane.com/ancestors/douglas.htm.

Food as a Link to a Sacred Genealogy

For both the Nation of Islam and the Latter-day Saints, foodways were crucial vessels for the creation and maintenance of sacred genealogies. Though different for each group, these genealogies linked members to an authoritative past that colored their lived present.[38] Nation Muslims sought to reclaim the nobility of their ancestors, the original people or tribe of Shabazz. In doing so, they worked to safeguard themselves in a virulently racist environment, to articulate a new vision of what it meant to be African American, and to accomplish both tasks in accordance with North American social norms. The people of Shabazz enjoyed radiant health, longevity, and physical beauty, all attributes highly prized in twentieth-century America. Elijah Muhammad taught that those who followed his food program would develop these same characteristics: "Eating the proper food also brings about a better surface appearance. Our features are beautified by the health that the body now enjoys from the eating of proper food and also eating at the proper time."[39] The Shabazzian lineage would have been unfamiliar to most Americans, but the fruits of that genealogy clearly located Nation Muslims within American values.

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[38] Moore also acknowledged similarities between Nation Muslims and Latter-day Saints establishing sacred genealogies: "The cultural factors that had permitted some Americans in the 1830s to believe that Joseph Smith had translated golden tablets were no stronger than the cultural factors that permitted some black Americans in the 1930s to believe that Yakub, a black scientist in rebellion against Allah, had created a cunning and deceitful white race who used power to wage war and to enslave the once superior black race. You did not have to live in a black urban neighborhood to see evidence that sustained notions of white demonology, but it was impossible not to if you did. . . . Black Muslims in the 1950s and 1960s attempted to do precisely what the Mormons had done. They reinvented the myth of creation. They used ritual and tight discipline to bind themselves into a community." Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans*, 192.

[39] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 1*, 32.

Racist narratives portrayed blacks as lazy, undisciplined, and incapable of controlling their bodies. Some Christians (including many Latter-day Saints during this period) believed that black skin was the mark of Cain, a curse through which dark skin revealed an inferior and even depraved soul. These Christians believed that since God made the mark and it was not a human invention, God sanctioned cultural norms that treated people with dark skin as inferior. In calling black Americans to eat in a new way, Nation founders told an alternative story about difference in skin color. The people of Shabazz had been scientists. Muhammad referred often to scientists in a generic way but did not reference specific studies. He did, however, describe consumption and digestive processes in language that invoked scientific authority. For example, "Eating one meal once a day or once every two days, with no meals between, gives the body time to rest the digestive machinery after the previous meal—and this gives the blood time to purify itself of the poison from the last meal."[40] His references to digestive processes convey a scientific air, which makes Nation approaches to eating seem reason-based. Nation Muslims' consumption of moderate amounts once a day—according to scientific principles[41] and in a clean, well-ordered environment—contradicted portrayals of African Americans as bestial and replaced them with the ideal that they descended from the ancient people of Shabbaz, who modeled self-restraint, rational thinking, and human flourishing.

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[40] Elijah Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 2* (Phoenix: Secretarius INC, 1972), 130.
[41] "The fact that fasting is the cure for 90 percent of our ills is known by the medical scientists." Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 1*, 20.

Elijah Muhammad's foodways recommendations would reinforce with every meal (or hunger pang) an alternative understanding of who the black race was: not inferior descendants of Cain but the original Asian inhabitants of earth who had been temporarily oppressed by white devils. As Muslims of Asian descent, Nation Muslims were encouraged to eat Middle Eastern and even Chinese food instead of American staples. Cookbooks and restaurant menus looked to other nations for technique and inspiration. Nation Muslims often ate at Chinese restaurants, and women learned to cook with Middle Eastern staples such as lentils and chickpeas. Foods that had been eaten by slaves (cornbread, black-eyed peas, chitterlings) were forbidden. Foods that fostered addiction were forbidden. Foods that would lead to longevity were the goal. Muslim women learning to alter familiar recipes for their families felt a connection both immediate and intimate to their Shabazzian legacy.

LDS foodways also positioned members as participants in a worthy tradition. When joining the LDS Church, people were literally adopted into the lineage of Abraham—becoming "chosen" like the Jews—regardless of their actual ethnic background.

Procuring and consuming food was not a matter of observing Jewish *kashrut*, but instead honoring an Israelite sense of a self-sufficient community watched over by God. For example, the Church enlisted volunteers to oversee the cultivation and preservation of food for the poor as a corrective to the exploitation decried by Jeremiah, Isaiah, and other Hebrew Bible prophets. LDS members often described their monthly twenty-four-hour fast in the terms of Isaiah 58, as increasing spiritual power and one's capacity to

serve the poor. Chapter 4 (“Not to Eat”) examines how fasting tied both Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims to an idealized ancestry, which made them the most chosen among residents in a chosen land. Latter-day Saints fasted together when a ward member had a particular need (for someone undergoing chemotherapy treatments or a sick infant, for example). Extended families also planned fasting days together in similar circumstances. Participants believed these fasts would increase the efficacy of their prayers. People experienced going hungry together for a common cause as sanctifying, bringing them into closer fellowship with God, and strengthening their ties with one another. Monthly fast days, when members all abstained from food and drink but for their own individual reasons, produced a similar if slightly diminished effect.

Food as a Gateway to Health and Scientific Progress

A third argument woven throughout this dissertation is that Nation Muslims and Latter-day Saints used mainstream American interpretive strategies to justify their respective foodways. Chapter 1 (“Good to Eat”) demonstrates how sanctioned foods and recipes portrayed both groups as healthier and more scientific than their fellow Americans who valued these same ideals, while chapter 5 (“Bad to Eat”) demonstrates how food prohibitions functioned to contradict images of either group as morally wanton (images fed by narratives told about slaves and polygamists) and affirmed members as acting in accordance with science and the laws of health.

Elijah Muhammad consistently employed scientific-sounding language to validate his food program, which was an amalgamation of American nutrition science, traditional Muslim law, and prophecy. As one example among many, his rejection of sweet potatoes

invoked health since Elijah Muhammad taught that sweet potatoes were toxic to the human body. When scholars emphasize only that sweet potatoes represented "slave food" and therefore an identity and genealogy to be rejected, they miss the continuity that Nation Muslims actually had with past food practices. I wish to add this interpretive layer to these discussions. Nation Muslims made important symbolic changes to their diet, but the rejection of slave food that figured prominently in Nation rhetoric did not obliterate their former practices. Instead, women by and large continued to prepare familiar dishes but simply substituted acceptable ingredients for those newly prohibited and justified these substitutions on the ground of health. "We were able to take what was the diet and transform it," explained Agieb Bilal, in the context of explaining that, while some ingredients in the diet changed, its overall form and substance did not.[42] When the Nation abandoned the southern staple of sweet potato pie, for example, Nation Muslims replaced it with different kinds of pie, including both bean and carrot pie, as I discuss in chapter 1. A careful comparative reading of recipes shows the official Nation carrot pie was different from typical southern recipes for carrot pie; Nation carrot pie was identical to sweet potato pie, but made with carrots. Nation Muslims did not stop making sweet potato pie, they simply made it with carrots instead. The shift from sweet potato ("slave sustenance") to carrot is a significant one as it heralds a change in priorities; Nation Muslims chose to emphasize health and what they saw as optimal nutrition.

Latter-day Saints also used science to describe their commitments to the Word of Wisdom. Scientist and LDS Church leader John Widtsoe and nutrition scientist Leah

[42] Bilal, interview.

Widtsoe used a scientific approach to justify LDS culinary and food-production habits. Both said they did so to prove to the world that Joseph Smith had been God's prophet, using the standards of the larger culture both to justify and insist upon the important distinctions of Mormonism. This refrain that scientific research proved Word of Wisdom guidelines to be best for human health, and therefore proved the prescience of Smith's revelation, continued throughout the twentieth century. Latter-day Saints uniformly spoke about health to make sense of the reasons for Word of Wisdom prohibitions against coffee, tea, alcohol, and tobacco. But although Latter-day Saints spoke about health and aspired to good health, they did not build their menu of popular dishes primarily on healthy food choices.

Producing Food to Promote Self-Sufficiency

Although language about the Word of Wisdom often focused on health and science, practice for Latter-day Saints was more often about prudence and self-sufficiency. In fact, self-sufficiency was a major preoccupation for both groups. The Nation set a goal to establish farms capable of growing enough produce to feed and clothe every African American in the country should the need arise. One hallmark of Nation Muslim homes was a large gray Rubbermaid trash can filled with two 50-pound bags of dried pink navy beans and two or three 5-gallon jugs of water.[43] Initially, these were to prepare for Armageddon, because Nation Muslims thought America would be destroyed by 1970.[44] Exemplary LDS homes had basement shelves lined with canned

[43] Ibid.
[44] Martha Frances Lee, *The Nation of Islam: An American Millenarian Movement* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 43–46. Fard prophesied that a Mother Plane would drop a Japanese-made

goods, home-bottled fruits, and 25-pound bags of wheat. These efforts were to prepare for Armageddon or personal financial disasters. Self-sufficiency also mattered in terms of establishing food sources that were independent from national systems. Latter-day Saints worried the government would have insufficient resources to aid all Americans during another crisis like the Great Depression, and they may have harbored a general mistrust of the country that had so betrayed them a century before. Nation Muslims felt an even keener need to be independent from white-run food systems when white people continued to abuse and disenfranchise them. Both groups also idealized farming as providing a wholesome lifestyle. I argue in chapter 1 that, for Latter-day Saints, practical concerns such as rotating items from food storage and making food that would feed a crowd economically were the factors that most contributed to the LDS canon of popular dishes. Chapter 3 ("Work to Eat") shows how efforts to achieve culinary independence from national food systems (growing your own food, preserving your own food, buying food from your own people) established both groups as more self-sufficient bootstrappers than their fellow Americans.

American religious outsiders cannot escape American values, even as they ostensibly reject American culture. Thus an emerging religious group or one marginalized by mainstream culture, like the Nation of Islam and the LDS Church, while striving to create an independent "Zion" people separate from the evils of the United States, will employ U.S. values in their efforts to do so. In many respects, they try even to

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bomb on the United States and destroy the white race. He proposed this before WWII, so was probably thinking of Japanese battleships and not fantastizing about an inversion of the bombing of Hiroshima. Rubel, "The Nation of Islam," 6. See also Clegg, *An Original Man*, 66.

outperform "insiders" in the living of these values, to be more chosen, healthier, and more self-sufficent than their fellow Americans. The problem for such groups is to negotiate their promulgation of mainstream values with maintenance of their status as an independent group that is separate from and superior to the mainstream. In popular terms, they must define and prescribe, in day-to-day living, how to be "in but not of" the world.

What both groups believed about science and progress reveals that assimilation and separation were simultaneous processes, not just one story for nonbelievers and another for community members, as Mauss identified,[45] but a pursuit of both agendas (belonging and distinction) both inside and outside their communities. The exception here is sacred genealogy; some members may have hesitated to bring up their chosen status too frequently in discussions with outsiders, although that status would have been very familiar to their fellow Americans. But members of these two groups did not only discuss prohibitions in terms of health in conversation with other Americans, they also did so within their communities. Likewise with self-sufficiency. At the same time members of these groups separated themselves, at least ideologically, from industrialized food systems (particularly Nation Muslims) and reliance on government welfare (particularly the Latter-day Saints), they invoked the American notion of self-sufficiency to explain and justify their efforts, both within and without their traditions. As we have seen, this pattern of simultaneous assimilation and separation will be a consistent theme throughout this dissertation. Reviewing what Elijah Muhammad and LDS leaders said about food and how followers responded (i.e., how they cooked and ate) contributes to a more

[45] Mauss, "Rethinking Retrenchment: Course Corrections in the Ongoing Campaign for Respectability," 3.

complete understanding of the hybrid, fluid, and changing nature of their religious priorities.

Methodology

Foodways as cultural practices concern not only prohibitions but also how people eat, how their food is produced, and when they abstain from food altogether. Yet students of both the Nation and the LDS Church have centered their investigations of and theorizing about foodways mainly on prohibitions, framing practice as a rejection of soul food and American culture. My study performs a close analysis of food habits in their entirety, discussing not only prohibitions but also favorite dishes and recipes, fasting patterns, priorities in food preparation and production, and table manners. My work contributes to the emerging field of Religion and Food by providing a more complete model for the way a study of food illuminates participation in an American outsider religious group.

My major sources include magazine and newspaper articles, speech transcripts, oral history interviews, devotional literature, and cookbooks. In practice, the sources differ between traditions. Official statements for the Nation during this period came by and large from Elijah Muhammad. Even today when you ask Nation Muslims about their food practices, they direct you to Elijah Muhammad's *How to Eat to Live*, volumes 1 and 2. "Everything you need to know is in those books," a representative at the National Office told me.[46] While Elijah Muhammad was the Nation's lone official voice, the LDS Church had a number of official voices. During the period that Elijah Muhammad oversaw the Nation (1934 to 1975), the LDS Church had six different presidents: Heber J.

[46] These headquarters are in Chicago.

Grant, George Albert Smith, David O. McKay, Joseph Fielding Smith, Harold B. Lee, and Spencer W. Kimball. Each of these presidents had two counselors in addition to the male leaders known as the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Although each current president's word by convention trumped those of all his peers and predecessors, members saw all of these men as official authorities. During the five decades I examine here (1930–1980), the LDS Church was older and had a much larger membership than the Nation, with numerous periodicals and substantial financial resources. I was only able to find one cookbook from the Nation, while there are many cookbooks by LDS authors intended for an LDS audience. Latter-day Saints are painstaking record keepers, and many primary sources are housed at the Church History Library in Salt Lake City (where I now work). The Nation has no such archive. I have worked conscientiously to overcome these discrepancies, trying to balance the kinds of sources and information I use for each group so that Latter-day Saints do not receive greater attention than Nation Muslims.

The values of mainstream American culture during the period under study included the importance of cleanliness, health, scientific thought, and self-sufficiency. All of those preoccupations informed LDS and Nation culinary ideologies, including the pursuit of socially sanctioned foods, the invocation of noble genealogies, and the employment of scientific rhetoric as justification for community foodways. My project analyzes what members of both groups ate, what was prohibited, where they produced and preserved their own food, how and why they kept a fast, and what norms they followed at the table. This study shows that the notions of identity and foodways that

members entertained are less radical and more grounded in societal norms than scholars have previously acknowledged.

Chapter 1: Good to Eat

Many religious communities are celebrated or maligned as producers of a representative dish. For the Nation of Islam since the 1960s, this dish has been Bean Pie. Latter-day Saints have not had any parallel dish, although since the 1980s others have teased them about Jell-O and funeral potatoes. Nevertheless, members of both groups tend to associate certain menu items with their religious community.

This chapter attempts a new technique for testing accepted theories about marginalized religious groups. Collections of community recipes demonstrate the everyday theological prioritizing family cooks engage in while determining what foods are good to eat. As a result, recipes demonstrate the simultaneous process of assimilation and separation members engage when relating to their broader American community. At the same time members create something specific to the needs of their community, such as bean pie, they make decisions about that item based on their religious priorities (i.e., though strongly reminiscent of sweet potato pie, the pie will contain beans to make it more nutritious).

Through close readings of recipes and favorite dishes, I find that the American value of health exerted a more prominent influence on Nation Muslims' cuisine than did racialized identity formation, and that LDS welfare priorities such as self-sufficiency, frugality, and food storage shaped LDS dishes more than the Latter-day Saints' canonized dietary code, the Word of Wisdom. Because of the Nation's many food prohibitions (against collard greens, black-eyed peas, pork, and corn bread, for example),

observers have assumed that Nation Muslims' food habits were primarily influenced by a rejection of slave food during the period from 1930 to 1980. But a careful examination of recipes and favorite dishes demonstrates that Nation Muslims' foods were actually carefully modified traditional foods. An ingredient in a familiar dish may have changed, but the general character and flavors of that dish remained the same. Because both members and leaders in the Nation defined this food practice in terms of improving health, the shift in what was considered "good to eat" in this period represented more strongly a devotion to health than an outright rejection of slave foods. Similarly, many have assumed that the LDS dietary code, the Word of Wisdom, exerted the primary influence on LDS cuisine after Latter-day Saints began to observe it widely in the early twentieth century.[47] But such was the case for only a minority of followers. A careful look at recipes and popular dishes from the Latter-day Saint community shows that Church welfare values most influenced what Latter-day Saints found "good to eat."

General perceptions of these groups as strange, as outsiders, can support inaccurate assumptions about their foodways, most notably by highlighting what is different. In fact, the food habits of both Nation Muslims and Latter-day Saints were intrinsically American because their priorities were innately American. Food habits based on the values of health and self-sufficiency demonstrate the extent to which these "outsiders" were actually "in."

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[47] Historian Thomas G. Alexander notes that Latter-day Saints' "adherence to the Word of Wisdom in the nineteenth century was sporadic," with greater strictness about eschewing coffee, wine, and beer only coming with the tenure of Joseph F. Smith, who was president of the LDS Church from 1901 to 1918. In 1906, water began to be substituted for wine in some sacrament meetings, and leaders began preaching more frequently and stridently about the Word of Wisdom. In 1921, full adherence to the Word of Wisdom became a requirement for Church members to gain entrance to an LDS temple. See Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 258, 261, 264.

Although the foods that Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims regularly prepared and the ways they thought about their popular dishes exposed a vital engagement with typical American ideals, neither group merely submitted to these ideals as a way to fit in. Edward Curtis calls it "tempting to view the NOI and its ethics of the black Muslim body as a capitulation to these American middle-class norms.'"[48] He contends that Elijah Muhammad incorporated middle-class Protestant values into a new Islamic framework as a method of empowerment.[49] I add a caveat to Curtis's findings because, regardless of whether the body became "Islamized," Nation Muslims perceived food primarily in terms of the American value of good health.

Cultures the world over value health, but Americans have approached the relationship between health and eating in their own "scientific" way. Nutrition science was born, bred, and celebrated in this country, and nutrition science contributed to the success of industrialized food. Chemist Wilbur Olin Atwater first brought calories and nutrients to the attention of the American public, and the Department of Agriculture published Atwater's food tables, which listed nutritive values including protein, fat, carbohydrates, and calories, in 1895. Atwater argued that Americans should ignore their palates to achieve good health. Culinary historian Leslie Brenner defined Atwater's legacy like this: "Americans learned to see food not as the source of pleasure, but instead merely as sustenance and fuel."[50] Certainly, Americans learned to talk about food in terms of nutritional content. Religious studies scholar R. Marie Griffith noted that health

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[48] Curtis, *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam, 1960–1975*, 127–30.
[49] Ibid., 129.
[50] Leslie Brenner, *American Appetite: The Coming of Age of a National Cuisine* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000), 18.

was a live topic while Elijah Muhammad was writing the articles that became *How to Eat to Live*: "During the 1950s and accelerating into the 1960s, movements for black power and liberation spurred forceful discussions about the need for bodily care, nutrition, and general health. Food, in fact, was at the center of black political debates during the civil rights movement and beyond, as a range of religious voices sought to transform the lives of African Americans by overhauling their food practices."[51] Nation Muslims were not the only African Americans thinking hard about health.

Both Nation Muslims and Latter-day Saints saw themselves as crucially distinct from mainstream culture for important reasons. The Nation read mainstream culture as racist and corrupt. Latter-day Saints tried to be "in the world but not of the world," meaning they were to actively participate in society while keeping themselves purer than the status quo. Rather than adopting mainstream values in order to shine in the eyes of American society, these groups pursued these values only when they might lead to a spiritually higher way of living. In other words, the pursuit of good health and self-sufficiency would not make them *like* mainstream America; it would make them *better*. For Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims, the priority was to please God—to create their own mode of living for God's sake, not to impress their American neighbors. But the means they employed to please God inevitably represented American values.

[51] R. Marie Griffith, *Born Again Bodies: Flesh and Spirit in American Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 155.

Eating for Health in the Nation of Islam

As discussed in the introduction, scholars have downplayed the significance of Elijah Muhammad's rhetoric about health to reveal the "real" reason for the food habits of the Nation of Islam, which they see as the construction of identity.[52] Food and identity were certainly linked in the Nation, but this is not the whole story. Elijah Muhammad did not explicitly tell his followers to eat small navy beans in search of a new identity; when he taught them to eat small navy beans, he said to eat them to foster good health. The significance of this emphasis on health has been under-investigated and under-emphasized. Muhammad spoke disparagingly of the slave diet because he believed it to undermine good health. In *How to Eat to Live,* a two-volume work published in 1967 and 1972, Muhammad wrote that the slave diet was bad for both body and spirit. Slaves, he said, had been forced by masters to eat certain foods out of two main motives: a desire to economize (by finding a use for foods which were inexpensive and which the wealthy were not willing to eat), and the "devilish" aim to undermine slaves' well-being (through the consumption of polluted food). His definitions of this diet varied from what he envisioned slaves actually had eaten to what white slave masters encouraged African Americans to eat in the mid-twentieth century.

Muhammad's depictions of slave foods correlate with more recent scholarship. Sociologist William C. Whit has also discussed slave food in economic terms, as that food left over once slave owners had eaten the animal parts they deemed desirable:

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[52] Austin, *Achieving Blackness*, 35; Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 159; Curtis, *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam, 1960–1975*, 129–30; Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*, 22, 25, 47; Curtis, "Islamizing the Black Body," 167–96.

> Whites, for example, kept for themselves what they considered the prime cuts from pigs, leaving the less desirable parts of the animal for slaves; creative cuisine was required for items like chitterlings and hocks. White masters frequently ate roasts, steaks, and chops, whereas slaves had to chop what meat they had into small pieces and use it in stews, soups, or other mixed dishes.[53]

Whit also notes that time constrictions meant weekday meals had to be easily prepared with on-hand ingredients. Muhammad would have defined these as, "Peas, collard greens, turnip greens, sweet potatoes and white potatoes," which he noted were "very cheaply raised foods. The Southern slave masters used them to feed the slaves, and still advise the consumption of them."[54] Whit also described the advantage of relatively fast preparation times for "foods that could be eaten by hand (e.g., bread, biscuits, and roast potatoes)."[55] Muhammad often decried quick breads, like biscuits, and undercooked breads as bad for health: "The Christian civilization has taught the so-called Negro slave to eat freshly baked bread, white biscuits or white roles, just out of the oven, and it scorns old bread, which is better for the stomach than freshly baked bread or cakes."[56] Although Muhammad's food recommendations clearly rejected slave habits, he emphasized that slave food was bad because it spoiled good health. His food recommendations therefore both foster good health and encourage a radical black identity different from slave mores, but good health is the higher priority.

Because they have focused on the connection between slave food and identity, other scholars have missed the fact that the Nation's rejection of slave food was not

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[53] William C. Whit, "Soul Food as Cultural Creation," in *African American Foodways: Explorations of History and Culture*, ed. Anne Bower (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 51.
[54] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 1*, 5.
[55] Whit, "Soul Food as Cultural Creation," 62.
[56] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 1*, 10. See also page 26 and Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 2*, 72.

absolute. Food for Nation Muslims did not have to be entirely different from slave food; it only had to be healthier than slave food. As a result, instead of creating an entirely new way of eating, Nation recipes often simply substituted an acceptable ingredient for a forbidden one to continue making a traditional dish that formerly relied on a forbidden food. Bean pie, which Nation Muslims described as sweet potato pie made with beans instead of sweet potato, is the most obvious example. Nation Muslims believed these substitutions would safeguard health.

Good physical health had theological implications in the here and now. Elijah Muhammad did not believe in life after death. There would be no "pie in the sky" life in heaven; life on earth was all people had. So there was every motivation to make this life a good one, and a long one at that. "We only have one life," taught the Nation's leader, "And, if this life is destroyed, we would have a hard time trying to get more life; it is impossible. So try to keep this life that you have as long as possible."[57] In Muhammad's view, proper nutrition was essential for prolonging life, and an important component of the "this-worldly" salvation the Nation offered.[58]

Nation Muslims internalized this emphasis. In a column in the Nation's official newspaper, *Muhammad Speaks,* Sister Pattie X testified, "Messenger Muhammad has taught me how to eat, when to eat, and what to eat; therefore, my life has been prolonged."[59] Those who practiced orthophagy, or correct eating, could also ameliorate already existing medical conditions, like diabetes, and be liberated from additional

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[57] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 1*, 19.
[58] Martha Frances Lee has argued convincingly that the Nation's fixation with this-worldly reform qualifies it as a millenarian movement: "At its core was millenarianism, the belief in an imminent, ultimate, collective, this-worldly, and total salvation." Lee, *The Nation of Islam*, 2.
[59] Pattie X, "Original Black Woman Is Proud of Natural Heritage," *Muhammad Speaks*, July 28, 1967, 25.

complaints. "If you eat the proper food—which I have given to you from Allah (in the Person of Master Fard Muhammad to Whom be praise forever) in this book—you will hardly ever have a headache," promised Elijah Muhammad.[60]

There was pleasure in this diet as well. Sonsyrea Tate wrote a 1997 memoir about growing up in the Nation during the 1960s and 1970s. When she spoke with me in 2010, she recalled eating at a Nation-run school as a child, and remembered "wholesome smells" emanating from the cafeteria as workers prepared nutritious foods. Even treats were supposed to nourish. After Elijah Muhammad's death in 1975, the Nation schools were closed and Sonsyrea had to switch to a public school. She came to dread the stench escaping from those cafeteria doors, in contrast to the smells of "wholesome beef burgers and wheat doughnuts" that she had known at the University of Islam.[61]

Recipes for Health

Recipes also demonstrated the Nation's emphasis on health. New Nation Muslims received prescriptive kitchen training. Sisters with special dispensation developed recipes intended to fulfill Elijah Muhammad's culinary standards, then taught them to newcomers and women without official status in the expectation that all would use these recipes to feed their families. As happens with recipes, individual cooks tailored them to make them their own. But the recipes these sisters developed were the official starting point. Thus, whatever culinary experience they had been before joining, women in the Nation learned more about cooking from one another. Initially, sisters from the temple

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[60] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 1*, 22.
[61] Sonsyrea Tate, *Little X: Growing Up in the Nation of Islam*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), 120.

would visit a new recruit in her own kitchen, give her recipes, and teach her to prepare them. Such was the case with Sonsyrea Tate's grandmother, GrandWillie, who joined the Nation in the early 1950s.[62] Eventually the Muslim Girls Training (attended by women of all ages despite the title) and General Civilization Classes were more formally organized at the temples. *Muhammad Speaks* defined these courses thus:

> The Meaning of MGT & GCC is the Muslim Girls Training and General Civilization Class. This is the name given to the training of the women and girls in North America. HOW to keep house, How to read to their children, How to take care of their husband, Sew, cook and in general How to act at home and Abroad.[63]

Women and girls would attend this gender-specific training once a week, often on Saturdays. Here they learned how to cook as "Muslims."

The original MGT classes eventually dissolved along with the University of Islam, not long after Elijah Muhammad's death in 1975.[64] One former MGT student, Reda Faard Khalifah, saved her recipes from MGT and finally published them in 1995 under the title *The Muslim Recipe Book: Recipes for Muslim Girls Training and General Civilization Class (MGT/GCC) of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad.* Because of their provenance as recipes used by the Nation's women, I focus mainly on these sources in my analysis of the Nation's popular recipes.

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[62] When she wrote *Little X,* the author's name was Sonsyrea Tate. By the time I interviewed her, she had become Sonsyrea Tate Montgomery. Sonsyrea Tate Montgomery, telephone interview by Kate Holbrook, September 19, 2010; Tate, *Little X*, 15–21.

[63] Elijah Muhammad, "Woman In Islam," accessed October 5, 2010, http://www.muhammadspeaks.com/WomaninIslam.html.

[64] "Muslim Girl's Training (MGT) Program: St. Louis Muhammad Mosque #28," accessed October 5, 2010, http://muhammadmosque28.org/mgt.htm; "Muslim Girls Training (MGT)," accessed October 5, 2010, http://en.academic.ru/dic.nsf/enwiki/10040641; "MGT Online," accessed October 5, 2010, http://www.seventhfam.com/mgt/.

The brief (two-page) introduction to *The Muslim Recipe Book* focused on health, with Khalifah highlighting places where more current developments in food distribution made healthier options available. For example, she mentioned that the old technique of browning rice to improve its nutritive value was outdated since "wholesome naturally brown rice" was now readily available. The introduction also called attention to vegetable and vegetarian recipes in the book because they "build radiant health."[65]

One of the major findings these recipes yield was that they were not especially distinct from the cuisine that in the 1960s came to be called soul food. Among scholars who show that Elijah Muhammad sought to create a new sense of identity for black people in America, Algernon Austin argued the Nation had an "Asiatic" understanding of race, one that "rejected 'soul food' for Asiatic cuisine."[66] But the recipes tell a different story.

The term *soul food* was popularized in the '60s as part of a broader black power strategy of turning parts of culture that had been seen as personal into foci for political energy. Activists interpreted behaviors that previously were accorded little significance ("the personal") to reveal inequities in the broader forces that shaped those behaviors ("the political"). Soul food was a proud reference to foods that slaves ostensibly ate. Celebrating soul food was therefore an embrace of African American heritage and resourcefulness. Food historian Frederick Douglass Opie described the process as

[65] Khalifah, *The Muslim Recipe Book*, 6–7.
[66] Austin, *Achieving Blackness*, 35.

defining "Southern-based black cuisine as a marker of cultural blackness."[67] In practice however, soul food was not always the same as slave food.

Opie's list of soul food dishes included collards, Hoppin John, fried chicken, cornbread, and sweet potato pie. How many slaves would really have had access to a pie plate and oven in which to bake sweet potato pie? Slaves ate sweet potatoes, but they likely made the pie for their white masters and not themselves. Furthermore, perhaps the most iconic soul food dish was chitterlings, which slaves most certainly did eat. But they had also been widely eaten and enjoyed by southern whites with limited economic means.[68] In fact, because slaves cooked for whites, the two races over time came to share many continuities in cuisine. "Over time, the planter class took great delight in the dishes of their slaves, such as chitlins; turnip greens, collards, and kale simmered with smoked pork parts; roasted yams; gumbos; hopping John, cornbread, crackling bread, and cobblers; and various preparations of wild game and fish."[69] The point here is simply that *soul food* is a construct, and only sometimes represents the food slaves ate. This concept developed during the 1960s, decades after both Fard and Muhammad first taught Nation prohibitions. Therefore, at least initially they were not preaching against soul food, but against many foods that slaves had eaten. Even when fried chicken had become part of the soul food canon, Muhammad said it was okay to eat (so long as the chickens had not been what we today call free range). Nation Muslims were therefore also discriminating in their rejection of soul food; some of it was acceptable.

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[67] Frederick Douglass Opie, *Hog & Hominy: Soul Food from Africa to America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), xii.
[68] "Chitlins (Chitterlings): Encyclopedia of Food & Culture," accessed October 7, 2010, http://www.enotes.com/food-encyclopedia/chitlins-chitterlings.
[69] Opie, *Hog & Hominy*, 36.

However, by the time soul food was developed, Nation Muslims themselves identified differences between their own diet and a soul diet. In an interview during the early 1970s, while she was cooking for Muhammad Ali, Lana Shabazz admitted the relationship between her cooking and traditional Southern cooking: "We don't eat sweet potatoes, but I cook butternut squash with butter, sugar and nutmeg so it tastes just like sweet potatoes."[70] Her interviewer described her cooking as heavily influenced by traditional Southern fare, which she called soul, "Mrs. Shabazz . . . skillfully adapted the subtle and savory seasonings of Southern soul food to the dietary restrictions and requirements laid down in the culinary catechism, *How to Eat to Live* by Elijah Muhammad."[71] The categories of slave food and soul food thus overlapped in people's heads, but they did see that Nation foods built on slave/soul/Southern tradition with important substitutions based on their "culinary catechism."

Although food for Nation Muslims did not have to be absolutely different from slave food, it did have to be healthier than slave food. As a result, instead of creating an entirely new way of eating, Nation recipes often simply substituted an acceptable ingredient for a forbidden one to continue making a traditional dish that formerly relied on a forbidden food. Bean pie, which members described as sweet potato pie made with beans instead of sweet potato, is the most obvious example. Nation Muslims believed these substitutions would safeguard health.

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[70] Mimi Sheraton, "Lana Shabazz Has Cooked For Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X and Now It's Ali," *Lakeland Ledger*, September 29, 1976, 16C.
[71] Ibid.

But from the perspective of particular prohibitions, members of the Nation of Islam did reject slave food on some level. Elijah Muhammad was adamant and explicit that Nation Muslims should not eat pork, collard greens, black-eyed peas, cornbread, or other staples of a slave diet. But other traditional slave foods they simply adapted to fit their understanding of what was wholesome.

MGT recipes followed Muhammad's lead in teaching that sweet potatoes were bad for health; he thought they had too much starch and produced gas. So carrots were often substituted for sweet potatoes. For example, Sonsyrea Tate described carrot fluff, a favorite dish from childhood, as "a sweet blend of soft carrots, brown sugar, nutmeg, cinnamon, and enough eggs to make it fluffy *like mashed sweet potatoes*."[72] *The Muslim Recipe Book* was filled with similar ingredient swaps. It had recipes for barbequed meats and barbequed short ribs of beef that were similar to soul food recipes, but beef had been substituted for pork.[73] Sometimes the beef substitution was not even necessary. *Pinch of Soul,* a popular soul food cookbook published early in 1970, provides a good foil for the Nation recipes. The introduction to the *Pinch of Soul* barbeque section teaches that beef ribs are as good as pork, and more economical. A soul recipe for barbecue sauce calls for a sauce flavored by chutney, catsup or tomato sauce, brown sugar, dry mustard, hot sauce, cayenne pepper, garlic powder, and onion to be used with pork.[74] The barbeque sauce in *The Muslim Recipe Book* has a similar flavor base: vinegar (which would add the piquancy of the chutney), green pepper (often in chutney), tomato paste, dry mustard, red

[72] Tate, *Little X*, 67, emphasis mine.
[73] Khalifah, *The Muslim Recipe Book*, 31, 34.
[74] Pearl Bowser and Joan Eckstein, *A Pinch of Soul* (New York: Avon, 1970), 201.

pepper, garlic, and onion. There is no great distinction between the two sauces. The barbecue cooking techniques are also similar, calling for cooking on top of the stove, then browning in the oven or broiler. The barbecue section of *Pinch of Soul* instructs: "Outdoor barbecuing for simple enjoyment has not traditionally been a 'soul' thing . . . few of our grandparents indulged in a whole pig or side of beef cooked on an open fire. Soul barbecuing took place mainly in the oven of a wood-burning stove."[75] Likewise, *The Muslim Recipe Book* calls for initial cooking on top of the stove, to be finished in the oven. Cooking time marks the main difference in technique. The soul recipe "Mrs. Shorey's Ribs" calls for thirty-five to forty minutes in the oven, while Muslim "Barbecue Short Ribs of Beef" cook in the oven for two hours, "or until the meat is well done."[76] Elijah Muhammad taught that, for health, meat should be cooked until very well done.[77]

Some recipes did not even undergo a title change. *A Pinch of Soul* included a recipe for navy bean soup, one of Elijah Muhammad's favorite dishes and a Nation classic. This navy bean soup included streak o' lean (a pork product, sometimes made into lard) and cubed salt pork but otherwise closely resembled the MGT recipe for navy bean soup.[78] Because their soup was vegetarian, the Nation Muslims' recipe called for tomato paste instead of canned tomatoes and vegetable oil—the paste imparted a deeper flavor to compensate for the lack of meat.

Bean pie was the dish most emblematic of the Nation of Islam. In fact, often bean pie was all that outsiders knew about the Nation, because they had seen well-dressed men

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[75] Ibid., 197–98.
[76] Khalifah, *The Muslim Recipe Book*, 30.
[77] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 1*, 64–65.
[78] Bowser and Eckstein, *A Pinch of Soul*, 80; Khalifah, *The Muslim Recipe Book*, 14.

selling individual pies on street corners in major metropolitan areas. Unlike the overlapping representative dishes of other religious groups (for example, Latter-day Saints, Methodists, and Presbyterians might all claim green Jell-O salad), bean pie was unique to the Nation. Once again, however, the values it conveyed were not unique. To members of the Nation, bean pie represented health; it was a healthy dessert. Nation Muslims described bean pie as sweet potato pie made with mashed navy beans instead of sweet potatoes. Technically, bean pie had a custard base, and sweet potato pie did not. But of primary significance was what members believed about the pie—that it was healthier than sweet potato pie. Elijah Muhammad's son Jabir has even explained bean pie in these terms on YouTube.[79] Jabir Muhammad worked for years as the manager of Muhammad Ali, a heavyweight boxing legend and Nation Muslim.[80] According to Jabir, it was Ali's personal cook, Lana Shabazz, who first developed bean pie, to safeguard the champ's health. However, Shabazz wrote in her cookbook that she first met Ali in a Nation restaurant in New York where he often ate. She reported that his favorite meal there was "lamb shanks, butternut squash, string beans, and bean pie," which suggests bean pie already existed. [81] Thanks to Jabir's endorsement, however, bean pie connoisseurs see Shabazz's recipe as particularly authentic.

Bean Pie

3 cups sugar
½ pound unsalted butter

[79] Katharine Shilcutt, "Bean Pie, My Brother?," December 29, 2010, http://blogs.houstonpress.com/eating/2010/12/bean_pie_my_brother.php.
[80] Richard Goldstein, "Jabir Herbert Muhammad, Who Managed Muhammad Ali, Dies at 79," *New York Times*, August 27, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/28/sports/othersports/28muhammad.html.
[81] Lana Shabazz, *Cooking For the Champ: Muhammad Ali's Favorite Recipes* (New York: Jones-McMillon, 1979), 11.

2 tablespoons cinnamon
2 tablespoons corn starch
5 well-beaten eggs
3 cups cooked navy beans, mashed through food strainer (may substitute carrots or butternut squash)
2 cups evaporated milk
5 drops yellow food coloring
1 teaspoon lemon extract

Heat oven to 450°. In medium-size bowl cream together sugar and butter. Add cinnamon and corn starch and blend well. Add eggs, one at a time; beat to blend. Add beans; beat. Add milk, food coloring and extract. Blend well; set aside.[82]

The message Elijah Muhammad preached about the importance of health—and of the role food played in attaining good health—reached the Nation's sisters, and was of primary importance for many in the Nation. Sonsyrea Tate Montgomery confirmed that this was the case for her mother, who had worked as a nurse and continued to prioritize nutrition after leaving the Nation and beginning to practice a more mainstream form of Islam.[83] Similarly, Betty Shabazz, wife of Malcolm X, focused on the health aspects of diet both before and after her husband's assassination in 1965. Her daughter recalled, "My mother, as a rule, did not allow us to have much candy. Being a nurse and a Muslim she was extremely health-conscious and carefully monitored what we ate."[84]

Additional Benefits to Health: Self-restraint and Beauty

While many Americans would agree that self-restraint can result in improved health (not smoking, avoiding fatty foods, etc.), Elijah Muhammad argued that the reverse is also true: good health can promote self-restraint. Proper nutrition fortified

[82] Ibid., 95.
[83] Montgomery, interview.
[84] Ilyasah Shabazz, *Growing up X* (New York: One World/Ballantine Books, 2003), 44.

individuals to resist bodily temptations. In the Nation, the influence of worthy food began even before birth. Elijah Muhammad lectured women about the impact their eating habits had on their unborn fetuses, and he was an energetic proponent of breastfeeding as well. He argued that

> [failure to breastfeed] is why we have such a great percentage of delinquency among minors. The child is not fed from his mother's breast—she is too proud of her form. Therefore, she lets the cow and other animals nurse her new-born baby. . . . When the baby reaches the age of 10, and if it is a male, most of them begin to indulge in drinking alcoholic beverages and using tobacco in one form or another.[85]

When children were properly nourished, this logic suggested, they would be free from the pernicious appetite that leads to addiction with its resulting immoral behaviors, such as stealing and adultery.[86]

Food continued to influence character once Nation Muslims were old enough to control their own food habits. Elijah Muhammad particularly warned against imitating the habits of white people, which led to moral degradation:

> A doom is set for the whole race of them, and you will share their doom with them if you continue to eat and drink intoxicating drinks just because you see them doing such things. . . . White people do this to tempt you to do the same so that you can share hell fire with them. Eat one meal a day and eat good food as has been prescribed for you in this book.[87]

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[85] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 1*, 81–82.

[86] The MGT recipes are also written in the same no-nonsense style as domestic science texts with such pragmatic recipe labels as "Cauliflower," "Cauliflower 2" and "Plain Asparagus No. 3."

[87] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 1*, 106. "Hellfire" was something experienced in life, since there was no life after death. Elijah Muhammad wrote, for instance, "The hereafter means after the destruction of the present world, its power and authority to rule. . . . My people have been deceived by the archdeceiver with regard to the hereafter. They think the hereafter is a life of spirits up somewhere in the sky, while it is only on the earth, and you won't change to any spirit being. The life in the hereafter is only a continuation of the present life. You will be flesh and blood. You won't see spooks coming up out of graves to meet God. No already physically dead person will be in the hereafter; that is slavery belief, taught to slaves to keep them under control." Elijah Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman in America* (Chicago: Muhammad Mosque of Islam No. 2, 1965), 303–4.

Elijah Muhammad didn't just teach that good health would lead to improved self-restraint and morality; he also promised greater physical beauty to those who lived a healthy lifestyle. "Eating the proper food also brings about a better surface appearance," he taught. "Our features are beautified by the health that the body now enjoys from the eating of proper food."[88] Similar to the way slim bodies have been seen as evidence of personal righteousness among some evangelical Christians,[89] beautiful bodies in the Nation evidenced those who had earned God's blessing. Slenderness was also a priority. One former Nation Muslim described a "penny tax" that was implemented when he would attend temple meetings during the time of Elijah Muhammad. The brothers had specific (scientifically determined) standards for an appropriate correlation between weight and height. Brothers attending meetings would need to stand on the scale and pay one penny for each pound that exceeded the standard.[90]

Rhetoric and recipes show the high priority of health in Nation of Islam meals. Members would achieve health through following the culinary dictates of Elijah Muhammad, which would result in turn in a long life, increased power to resist evil, and beautiful physical appearance.

Latter-day Saints: Eating for Self-Sufficiency

If minor salutary substitutions to improve health exemplified Nation culinary practice, what priority most characterized Latter-day Saint cuisine? While health was always a secondary concern, the primary value for Latter-day Saints was that of self-

[88] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 1*, 32.
[89] Griffith, *Born Again Bodies*.
[90] Montgomery, interview.

sufficiency. The don'ts of the Word of Wisdom (consumption of alcohol, tobacco, coffee, and tea) were important to LDS identity, but they were not particularly relevant to LDS culinary choices (except at the margins). Far more important to what Latter-day Saints chose to eat were the dos—positive injunctions of self-sufficiency and frugality.

While self-sufficiency had long been a hallmark of Mormonism, with Brigham Young encouraging "home manufacture" as early as the 1850s and 1860s,[91] the value took on a new urgency during the Great Depression of the 1930s. In 1933, Utah had the nation's fourth-highest unemployment rate of 35.8 percent, and nearly a third of the state's population was receiving some or all of its necessities, such as food and clothing, from the government.[92] Harold B. Lee began experimenting with approaches to Church welfare assistance in response to this national crisis, the goal being to help Latter-day Saints become financially self-sufficient both as individuals and as a people. The major tenets of Church welfare included frugality, hard work, food storage, and work on behalf of others.[93] I discuss these efforts at length in chapter 2, "Work to Eat," but introduce them here because the dominant values are manifest in recipe ingredient lists, which featured food-storage staples. Latter-day Saints were taught to rotate food-storage staples

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[91] In 1862, Brigham Young derided his Latter-day Saint listeners by saying they would "put fortunes in the pockets of strangers, to import from a distance what we can produce at home. If this people had followed the counsel given to them, there is not a man in Israel would have raised a bushel of wheat for our enemies who came here to cut our throats, without making them pay from five to ten dollars a bushel for it." Young, "Home Manufactures: Certain Destruction of the Enemies of Truth," general conference remarks, Salt Lake City Tabernacle, April 6, 1862, in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:271.

[92] John S. McCormick, "The Great Depression," *Utah History Encyclopedia,* accessed January 4, 2014, http://historytogo.utah.gov/utah_chapters/from_war_to_war/thegreatdepression.html.

[93] Heber J. Grant, *Gospel Standards: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Heber J. Grant, Seventh President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1998), 111; Marion G. Romney, "Living Welfare Principles," *Ensign*, November 1981, 93; Garth L. Mangum and Bruce D. Blumell, *The Mormons' War on Poverty: A History of LDS Welfare, 1830–1990* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993).

into everyday cooking and avoid luxury items such as professional catering, even for major occasions such as weddings and funerals. Inexpensive meals made from food-storage staples were emblematic of LDS cuisine.

Such a dish was tuna noodle casserole. When one woman, dying of liver cancer in 1990, yearned for the LDS food of her past, she requested a dish that exemplified "provident living," an LDS phrase that suggested frugality, emergency preparedness, and the careful marshaling of food storage. Trish had not attended church for decades, though she still played LDS hymns on the piano and still had visiting teachers.[94] Her home was big, in a fashionable section of Brookline, Massachusetts. As befits the owner of such a home, she structured her culinary calendar around traditional New England fare such as Yorkshire pudding, fruitcake with hardsauce, and corned beef and cabbage. But during the final weeks of her life, these held no appeal. Trish shrank away, refusing to eat, and her family members "tried desperately to think of something to comfort her or bring her some small pleasure."[95] Days before her death, she asked for a dish from her past called tuna noodle casserole.[96] Her sister later wrote about this request: "'Call the visiting teacher,' Trish said in a whisper, 'and tell her to bring the good food with the tuna and noodles in it. Remember it?' she said, almost pleading. 'It had cream of mushroom soup

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[94] LDS women members of the Relief Society were organized in a visiting teaching program where sisters were divided into companionships that visited each willing adult female member of the congregation. In the Church's early history, visiting teachers worked especially to see that members had adequate food, clothing, and other essential living supplies. By the twentieth century, visiting teachers still supplied food, but it was more likely to be a treat, such as cookies or a fresh loaf of homemade bread. They would leave these items after talking with the sister, listening to her joys and troubles, praying, and often sharing a "spiritual thought."

[95] Judith Dushku, "My Sister's Banquet," in *Saints Well-Seasoned: Musings on How Food Nourishes Us—Body, Heart, and Soul*, ed. Linda Hoffman Kimball (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1998), 72.

[96] Although Trish did not grow up in the Mormon Corridor of Utah, Nevada, Idaho, and Arizona, popular dishes from that area infiltrated the cuisine of congregations throughout the country.

and cornflakes on top.'" Her family called Sister Shelley Hammond, who brought this dish in time for dinner that night. Trish's sister recalled, "It was exactly as Trish remembered it, and she ate with pleasure. It was what she needed most to eat before she died. My mother and I took turns feeding it to her."[97]

As Trish yearned for the cultural comforts of the Church into which she was born, it made sense for her to request a meal from a visiting teacher. LDS women deliver food to their coreligionists in times of crisis. But why tuna noodle casserole? What is Mormon about that? Often specific dishes point to a particular tradition not because they are distinctive but because they are believed to be so. Tuna noodle casserole was the kind of dish made from canned goods that one could find at any potluck in "whitebread" America.[98] But because it represented Mormon religious priorities, it was a staple of the LDS culinary experience. It promoted the LDS goal of self-sufficiency because it was inexpensive and created from items in food storage, and it fulfilled an ideal of food as service since it was easy to make in large quantities and transport. Similarly, Latter-day Saints famously ate Jell-O and funeral potatoes.[99] But Protestants throughout the country during this period brought Jell-O salads to potlucks, and funeral potatoes were simply a version of cheesy scalloped potatoes that had been assigned a particular name among Latter-day Saints. In and of themselves, these dishes were not unique to Latter-day Saints. What they represented was the application of deeply held LDS kitchen values that promoted self-sufficiency.

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[97] Dushku, "My Sister's Banquet," 73–74.
[98] Daniel Sack, *Whitebread Protestants: Food and Religion in American Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 61–97.
[99] Funeral potatoes were not known as such until the 1980s, but the recipe, calling for potatoes, cheese, sour cream, onions, and cream of mushroom soup, was in circulation before then.

Self-sufficiency and Frugality in Latter-day Saint Recipes

Many classic LDS recipes come from Winnifred Jardine's *Mormon Country Cooking* (1980), which represents an approach to food preparation familiar to many Latter-day Saints who lived between World War II and the 1970s. *Mormon Country Cooking* represented Latter-day Saint practice and ideals, and its suggested ingredients (apricots, peaches, rhubarb, zucchini, pecans[100]) were readily accessible through much of the Mormon Corridor. Jardine became food editor of the *Deseret News,* a Church-owned newspaper and one of Salt Lake City's two major dailies, in 1948 and wrote food columns until her retirement in 1984. But her recipe work was more reportorial than creative. Readers submitted many of the recipes for Jardine's column, and readers voted on which *Deseret News* recipes to include in the cookbook. As a result, the recipes in *Mormon Country Cooking* came from multiple Latter-day Saint sources and represent something of a collective culinary consciousness. Jardine even dedicated the book "to our *Deseret News* readers who contributed many of these recipes."[101]

These recipes were illustrative not only because they were gathered from the LDS community, but also because Jardine herself belonged to Mormonism's inner circle. As her editor wrote, "Winnifred Cannon Jardine's food-fixing background is as Mormon as the great turtle-shaped Tabernacle on Salt Lake City's Temple Square."[102] She descended from Church president Brigham Young and apostle George Q. Cannon, served on the Church's general boards, wrote homemaking lessons for Relief Society Manuals, and

[100] The book's preface reinforces this fact: "Many of Winnifred's dishes start right on the Bing cherry tree, peach trees, raspberry bushes, or tomato or zucchini plants in the Jardine home garden." Winnifred C. Jardine, *Mormon Country Cooking*, 1st ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1980) 9.
[101] Jardine, *Mormon Country Cooking*, 15.
[102] Ibid., 7.

sang in the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Jardine included recipes representative of what Latter-day Saints actually prepared and enjoyed, but when these representative recipes did not live up to the Word of Wisdom values she had as a former Church leader, she tried to bridge that gap. Just as Khalifah made notes in *The Muslim Cookbook* when community recipes did not fully meet Elijah Muhammad's ideal for health, so Jardine tried to address similar inconsistencies in *Mormon Country Cooking* recipes. For example, when the book failed to represent the Word of Wisdom standard of limited meat intake, Jardine redirected her readers to the ideal. The introduction to "Eggs and Cheese" reminded readers, "Eggs and cheese together make a nutritious, delicious combination that is grand for a people who have been counseled to use meat 'sparingly.'"[103] In the introductory section on "Meat, Fish and Poultry," she wrote, "Although counseled to eat meat and poultry 'sparingly,' Latter-day Saints still build many of the main meals around them. But they do not seem to eat large quantities."[104] Jardine's assessment about the quantity of meat consumption likely reflected her wishes more than actual fact, and her discomfort when practice failed to match the ideal.

Self-sufficiency was a hallmark of Jardine's recipes, which prioritized frugality and relied on food-storage staples.[105] Perhaps the popularity of wheat among Latter-day Saints has to do with the fact that it satisfies the requirements of their two most desirable and sometimes competing identities: self-sufficiency and health. LDS recipes showed a greater than average reliance on wheat. This grain was important both because it was

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[103] *Mormon Country Cooking,* 65.
[104] *Mormon Country Cooking,* 93.
[105] For some members, food storage was a crucial component of preparing for Armageddon, when provisions would be needed during the chaos that would precede Christ's Second Coming.

perceived as providing superior nutrition and because it was a popular component of food storage due to its long shelf life.[106] Jardine theorized:

> The penchant for breadmaking and baking may have come to Mormons from their pioneer ancestry. But more likely it has been encouraged by the hundreds of pounds of wheat stored in the cool basements of Mormon homes. Wheat is the heart of a Church-endorsed program of preparedness that calls for every family to maintain a two-year supply of food. Such provision is intended to sustain families not only during natural disasters, but also during personal crises—unemployment, disability, financial reverses. Mormons who comply find the practice not only a source of security but also a convenience and an economic advantage. Quantity buying generally means lower prices and buying ahead seems to slow down the bite of inflation.[107]

Recipes from twentieth-century Latter-day Saint cookbooks called for whole-wheat flour in quick breads and cookies where other cookbooks called for all-purpose flour. For example, Jardine's recipe for carrot cake included no all-purpose flour and incorporated a number of items with a long shelf life: vegetable oil, canned pineapple, and raisins.[108] Both collectively and as individuals, Latter-day Saints could store staggering amounts of wheat, the presence of which testified to their commitment to storing and using durable foods. But wheat was not the only ingredient that pointed to rotating food-storage staples. Bread recipes from a typical middle-American cookbook such as a *Farm Journal*

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[106] The Relief Society had a long tradition of storing wheat for use in emergency. Brigham Young encouraged Latter-day Saints to store wheat against famine from the time they first put down roots in Utah. When Young gave up on the men following his orders, he put women in charge of this task, which they pursued from 1877 to 1941. Because of this history, wheat is prominent on the Relief Society emblem. Jessie L. Embry, "Relief Society Grain Storage Program, 1876–1940" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1974); E. Cecil McGavin, "Grain Storage Among the Latter-Day Saints," *The Improvement Era*, March 1941.
[107] Jardine, *Mormon Country Cooking*, 39.
[108] Ibid., 257.

collection called for fresh milk,[109] whereas LDS recipes were likely to use powdered or evaporated milk.

LDS staples were not necessarily the aspired-to American staples. For example, chef James Beard, a man without strong religious ties who made a tremendous impact on twentieth-century American cuisine,[110] was by rights a member of the coastal elite, but he worked at being an everyman, composing cookbooks that represented the entire country and speaking to average Americans. In *How to Eat Better for Less Money,* Beard wrote, "This is not a book for the small and special group who don't have to bother their heads about the cost of food . . . but for you, the average American in the middle-income bracket."[111] Beard's book focused on economy, practicality, and feeding groups of people—a commonality with *Mormon Country Cooking* that makes the differences between the two works worth exploring. Beard encouraged people to keep a full pantry and to stock what he called an emergency shelf. For Latter-day Saints, emergency food storage was to provide sustenance in the event of unemployment, natural disaster, or political crisis. But for Beard, the "emergency" referred to unexpected guests for dinner. *Mormon Country Cooking* summarized the contents of Latter-day Saint storage like this: "A Mormon Larder is planned around foods that will store for two years, foods such as wheat, barley, rice, oats and corn along with dried beans, split peas, lentils and enriched pastas."[112] Because Beard intended pantry items for fast cooking without advance warning, his list omitted Latter-day Saint staples such as dried beans and split peas,

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[109] Nell B. Nichols, ed., *Farm Journal's Country Cookbook* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1959).
[110] James Beard, *James Beard's Delights and Prejudices* (Philadelphia: Running Press, 2001).
[111] James Beard and Sam Aaron, *How to Eat Better for Less Money* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1970), 7.
[112] Ibid., 79

which can require soaking and lengthy stove time. Neither did Beard recommend grains like whole wheat, cornmeal, and oats, which would prolong life in a crisis but not, in his mind, contribute to an adequate "emergency" meal for guests. When he wrote "canned peaches," his suggested amount for storage was one factory can. Latter-day Saints, on the other hand, would have read "canned peaches" and imagined shelves with gleaming quart bottles prepared by themselves or a loved one.[113] Beard's list included a number of items less familiar in Latter-day Saint food storage, such as canned tongue, caviar, gefilte fish, lobster, chutney, and liquors. The LDS pantry focused on cheap and durable sustenance with minimal class pretensions, whereas Beard geared his suggestions toward quick and impressive preparations for guests.

For Latter-day Saints, growing food was an essential element of "provident living," and some recipes emphasized the use of home garden produce. "Rhubarb Ice Cocktail," for example, appears to exist solely as a means for keeping stalks of rhubarb, a fixture in Utah gardens, from going to waste.

Rhubarb Ice Cocktail

4 cups (1 1/3 lb.) sliced fresh rhubarb
2 cups water
2 cups sugar
Ginger ale, chilled
Fresh mint, if desired

Wash and clean rhubarb; cut into 1-inch lengths. Combine with water and sugar in medium saucepan; cook until tender. Thoroughly strain juice from rhubarb, but do not press pulp through. Freeze juice. (Use drained rhubarb for pie or cobbler.) When ready to serve, break up rhubarb ice and

[113] Peach trees flourish in northern Utah, and home-produced canned peaches were a food-storage staple.

> mash into a slush. Spoon into punch cups or glasses; pour in chilled ginger ale. Garnish with mint leaves, if desired.[114]

This "Rhubarb Ice Cocktail" recipe called for few and inexpensive ingredients. A parenthetical instruction to use drained rhubarb in pie or cobbler was a declaration against waste—drained rhubarb would not have much flavor, so adding it to another dish would not improve flavor. This recipe took a vegetable that flourished in the Utah climate and made of it a nonalcoholic party beverage. However, this frugal beverage reveals significant aspirations toward broader cultural assimilation as well. Where Jardine could have named it "Refreshing Rhubarb Delight" or some other such designation appropriate at the time, instead she called it a cocktail. Latter-day Saints did not drink alcoholic cocktails, so this concoction was one in name only, and its name was aspirational. Cocktails were sophisticated.

The impulses to find a use for excess garden rhubarb and to name it a cocktail are not contradictory because they both indicate a desire for approval. Cocktail drinks signify status, even for Latter-day Saints. But frugality is also a source of approval. Latter-day Saints finally began to receive positive press in the 1930s because of provident living and the new Church Welfare Program.[115] Values like food storage and provident living had eased the way for Latter-day Saints to be more accepted by mainstream Americans, and Latter-day Saints cared about that acceptance (probably more than they wanted to admit).

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[114] Jardine, *Mormon Country Cooking*, 20.
[115] Jan Shipps, *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years Among the Mormons* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 68–69.

Like the rhubarb drink, "Italian Seasoning" also invoked cooking with garden produce and focused on the value of frugality.

Italian Seasoning

1/2 cup leaf oregano
1/2 cup leaf basil
2 tablespoons leaf sage
1 teaspoon thyme
1 jar (3 ¼ oz.) seasoned salt
2 tablespoons lemon pepper
2 tablespoons garlic powder[116]

Making your own Italian seasoning was supposed to save money. Jardine told readers that this recipe, along with others for dried onion soup and French herbs, could be made in quantity "for a fraction of the supermarket price," and that the Italian herb blend was excellent for seasoning food-storage dinners."[117] Frugality and food storage were the main priorities. Why not just buy Lipton onion soup mix or Italian seasoning and keep those in your food storage? Because making your own was less expensive. The recipe was not for the garden purist, however, because although it called for fresh oregano, basil, sage, and thyme, it also required products obtained only through the workings of a factory: lemon pepper and garlic powder. Making your own seasoning therefore was not about rejecting industrial foods as impure; it was about frugality.

Self-sufficiency through Caring for the Neighbors

Self-sufficiency meant individual frugality, but it also had a communal aspect of caring for each other. Many groups were good at caring for each other, religious or not,

[116] Jardine, *Mormon Country Cooking*, 221.
[117] *Mormon Country Cooking,* 209.

but Latter-day Saints did put a lot of energy into this. In fact, much of what made Trish's last meal quintessentially LDS was its source: the visiting teacher. Giving food to others—either by delivering it to homes, taking it to communal dinners, or preparing it daily for one's own (often large) family—was central to provident living. When she first heard my dissertation topic, one member responded, "Mormon food means taking food to other people,"[118] whether that was to a family whose father had broken a leg or to a woman with a newborn.

As a result, *Mormon Country Cooking* emphasized recipes that were ideal for making food to give away or take to gatherings. Jardine introduced the cake section with this note:

> Mormon women, who are members of the Mormon Relief Society, have learned to live by their creed, "Charity never Faileth." They can stir up a cake at a moment's notice practically with one hand. And cakes are sent out of the house on missions of mercy or triumph about as often as they are set onto their own tables. One of the standbys, 30-Minute Cocoa Cake is just that—a 30-minute production, frosting and all! And the tempting cake stays moist for days.[119]

To meet this need required three distinct chapters devoted to dessert recipes, and twenty-two party beverage recipes in a book for a people who eschewed alcohol. Latter-day Saint recipes produced generous yields for large families, for sharing, and for large parties. The former product director of Deseret Book Company, which now owns the rights to *Mormon Country Cooking* and many other Latter-day Saint cookbooks, reported that cookbooks have historically been among their best sellers and that the positive feedback often focused on the quantities these recipes produced. Readers have said the

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[118] Heather Sundahl, personal communication, September 2006.
[119] Jardine, *Mormon Country Cooking*, 255.

books taught them how to serve and entertain large numbers of people and facilitated the process of feeding a large family on a limited budget. "Finally," wrote one satisfied customer, "a recipe that feeds my family that I don't have to triple."[120]

Thus for a majority of Latter-day Saints, self-sufficiency tended to trump other values, so much so that an inexpensive meal made with the pantry staples of Campbell's soup, canned tuna, pasta, and breakfast cereal represented typical Latter-day Saint habits more than the whole grains and seasonal fresh produce mentioned in the Word of Wisdom. When Nation Muslims created dishes, they substituted food they perceived as healthy for the original unhealthy ingredients. Mashed sweet potato became carrot fluff. These substitutions in popular dishes signified a healthier choice. Popular dishes among Latter-day Saints, on the other hand, reflected their high prioritization of provident living, as they prepared inexpensive foods with a long shelf life in large quantities for sharing.

Health and the Word of Wisdom

Despite their primary emphasis on self-sufficiency, food ideals for some Latter-day Saints have focused on health. In fact, in the 1930s and 1940s, the most prominent Latter-day Saint writer on food argued specifically that Latter-day Saints should eat well and be healthier than their fellow Americans. Perhaps because John A. Widtsoe was an apostle (a member of the Church's governing body), the book he and his wife Leah wrote on the Word of Wisdom[121] was embraced by the First Presidency (the Church president with his two counselors) and designated the official priesthood manual of study for 1938,

[120]Ann Sheffield, telephone interview by Kate Holbrook, March 2010.
[121] John A. and Leah D. Widtsoe, *The Word of Wisdom: A Modern Interpretation* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1937).

meaning that male Churchgoers studied it every Sunday. A few years later, Leah Widtsoe wrote *How to Be Well*,[122] a cookbook that purported to review cutting-edge scientific information on nutrition.

The Widtsoes' writings in the late 1930s and early 1940s came during a time of increased attention to the LDS Word of Wisdom. As I explain in chapter 5, "Bad to Eat," Church president Heber J. Grant in 1933 began in earnest to enforce prohibitions against alcohol, tobacco, coffee, and tea by refusing temple recommends to the non-compliant.[123] Prohibitions in Word of Wisdom at this time became a more prominent part of what it meant to be LDS. But the Widtsoes were also very interested in these passages from the Word of Wisdom:

> And again, verily I say unto you, all wholesome herbs God hath ordained for the constitution, nature, and use of man—And again, verily I say unto you, all wholesome herbs God hath ordained for the constitution, nature, and use of man—Every herb in the season thereof, and every fruit in the season thereof; all these to be used with prudence and thanksgiving. Yea, flesh also of beasts and of the fowls of the air, I, the Lord, have ordained for the use of man with thanksgiving; nevertheless they are to be used sparingly; And it is pleasing unto me that they should not be used, only in times of winter, or of cold, or famine.[124]

The Widtsoes cared not just about what people should not do, but about what was good for them to eat: wholesome herbs, fruits, and foodstuffs other than meat.

The revelation's conclusion promised that those who kept the dietary code's provisions would enjoy physical benefits ("health in their navel and marrow to their bones") as well as spiritual ones ("wisdom and great treasures of knowledge"). John

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[122] Leah D. Widtsoe, *How to Be Well: A Health Handbook and Cook-Book Based on the Newer Knowledge of Nutrition* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1943).
[123] See chapter 5, "Bad to Eat."
[124] Doctrine and Covenants (D&C) 89:10–13.

Widtsoe's foreword to his wife's book *How To Be Well* reads like a manifesto and recalls speeches of Elijah Muhammad in its emphasis on the moral gravity of achieving health through alimentary habits:

> Th[e] dark pall of ignorance has been swept away, during the last few decades, by the light of discoveries, unparalleled in volume and importance. We now know, as never before, what foods, and food combinations, will best promote the health of the body. Those who do not respect and use these findings by seekers after truth, are willful offenders of their bodily needs; and of course, sooner or later, must pay the penalty of their error.[125]

The scope of his statement suggests penalties more dire than malnutrition. As did the Nation, the Widtsoes saw health as a spiritual as well as a physical matter. Trained in domestic science and founder of the home economics department at Brigham Young University, Leah believed, "If the body is fully nourished, it will help give the will power to say 'no' to the tempter, even though dressed in the false front of the 'weed that soothes' or the social glass that is supposed to give cheer and exhilaration, but which leads to degradation, disgrace, and death."[126] The substance of Leah's revolution was the power of food to save bodies and souls through increasing self-restraint.

In Utah, Leah Widtsoe became a household name and the Word of Wisdom was often called the "Word of Widtsoe."[127] But the appellation was not without derision. Regular people found it difficult to follow her culinary standards, which cautioned against refined sugar, white flour, too much meat, and even canned goods. In particular, Leah argued that Word of Wisdom dos were at least as important as its don'ts. In an

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[125] Widtsoe, *How to Be Well: A Health Handbook and Cook-Book Based on the Newer Knowledge of Nutrition*, 5.
[126] Ibid., 33.
[127] Alan K. Parrish, *John A. Widtsoe: A Biography* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 581. See also Leah D. Widtsoe, interview by Scott Hollis, Salt Lake City, 1965, 44, Church History Library.

interview near the end of her life, she expressed her belief that, although Winston Churchill smoked and drank, he lived to an old age because he lived the dos: he grew his own food on his country estate.[128] Though some groups of Latter-day Saints had taken health and the entire Word of Wisdom text very seriously, Leah Widtsoe thought the majority focused on prohibitions and neglected the Word of Wisdom dos.

Although Latter-day Saint health crusader Leah Widtsoe seems to be an example of an LDS fixation on health, in fact her story demonstrates just the opposite: that more than anything, Latter-day Saints prioritized provident living over health. Despite her best efforts, the study of *The Word of Wisdom: A New Interpretation* as a priesthood manual, the prominence she and her husband held in Latter-day Saint society, and the canonical status of the Word of Wisdom to back her up, Latter-day Saints did not do what she said. They preferred Church values of frugality and self-sufficiency over the health promises of Word of Wisdom eating.

In short, LDS favorite dishes did not particularly focus on health or Word of Wisdom dos but allowed Latter-day Saints to blend rather seamlessly with other Westerners. The Word of Wisdom had never been terribly stigmatizing for Latter-day Saints. In the 1830s and 1840s, reformers deliberated over the ways hot and cold drinks impacted the body and enthusiasm over whole grains was au courant. Latter-day Saints did not have to stop drinking alcohol until well after the temperance crusaders paved the way, and they comfortably ignored their own admonition to limit meat eating, thereby avoiding association with suspect vegetarian groups. Although many Saints obediently

[128] Widtsoe, interview. Churchill died in January 1965.

tended gardens, their framing of that activity in terms of self-sufficiency allowed them cultural distance from countercultural hippies and back-to-the-land enthusiasts.

Conclusion

Commonalities between Nation Muslims and Latter-day Saints shed light on how marginalized groups position themselves against broader society. Both groups were wary of mainstream behaviors and influences, such as what Latter-day Saints saw as the perils of government financial assistance and Nation Muslims' aversion to white people's food habits. Nevertheless, both placed marked emphasis on living deeply entrenched American values (namely, health and self-sufficiency).

A close reading of favorite dishes and recipes illustrates this dynamic, revealing Nation Muslims' highest priorities. In the Nation, recipes and conversations about food demonstrated their prioritization of health. Despite Nation Muslims' aspirations to both Asiatic and Islamic identities, American sensibilities remained prevalent both in the methods they used to justify dietary law and in the recipes themselves. Women crafted recipes around the dishes they knew, making substitutions that, according to Elijah Muhammad's teachings, would make the foods healthier. So sweet potato pie turned into bean pie, and barbecued ribs were made from beef instead of pork. The results they anticipated from these substitutions were also grounded in notions of health: long life, beauty, and increased self-restraint. The Nation had highly developed programs for the development of communal and individual self-sufficiency that mirrored that impulse among Latter-day Saints, but these were more evident in business plans than in dinner menus.

LDS cuisine, on the other hand, was most heavily informed by the ideal of Church welfare, which included frugality and self-sufficiency. Recipes shaped by these forces highlighted the incorporation of food-storage staples such as whole wheat and powdered milk, and inexpensive ingredients, such as garden produce and seasoning mixes made (mostly) from scratch.

Chapter 2. Work to Eat

Elijah Muhammad taught that his people owed nothing to their white oppressors—particularly not their lives. Rejecting conscripted military service during World War II, he evaded the United States draft and encouraged his followers to do the same. He was imprisoned for draft evasion from 1942 to 1946 in a federal prison adjacent to the rural community of Milan, Michigan, about fifty miles outside of Detroit.[129] When Elijah Muhammad's parole board asked him in 1945 what he planned to do upon his release, he responded, "To reform my people and put them back into their own. At the present time my followers and I plan to buy a farm upon which to raise food for ourselves and the market."[130]

This answer reveals his chosen religion's high level of commitment to self-determination. Both the Nation and the LDS Church believed that reliable food sources depended on hard work and self-sufficiency. Like the Nation of Islam, the LDS Church saw national welfare systems as unreliable and developed its own in response. Latter-day Saints worried that federal assistance would eventually give out and that it was spiritually destructive because it encouraged indolence. Both groups embraced the value of self-sufficiency for its own character-building sake.

Therefore, farming and economic welfare plans were a major part of LDS and Nation endeavors in the mid-twentieth century. Americans lauded self-sufficiency as an essential aspect of their national character, lionizing those who pulled themselves up by

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[129] Marsh, *From Black Muslims to Muslims*, 45.
[130] "FBI HQ File on Elijah Muhammad, Parole Report," April 23, 1945, quoted in Karl Evanzz, *The Messenger: The Rise and Fall of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1999), 450.

their bootstraps. For these minority groups to celebrate those enterprises did look like outsiders assimilating into mainstream culture. But Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims pursued these goals for decidedly separatist reasons. First, they felt they could not trust their fellow citizens to feed them during a crisis. They had legitimate reasons for this suspicion, as the government had betrayed them in the past—a more distant memory for Latter-day Saints and a still-present reality for Nation Muslims. Second, both groups anticipated and believed they had to prepare for the United States' impending doom; part of that preparation was to remove themselves from the fray. Their millenarian views suggested that all the "wicked" in the country would be destroyed, while they, the "righteous," would endure the coming tribulation. The downside to being righteous and surviving the destruction was that they had to keep on living. As such, they needed to prepare to ameliorate the suffering that would come, especially since they believed that government systems would likely be destroyed in the general devastation.

Latter-day Saint Self-Sufficiency

LDS efforts at self-sufficiency were already one hundred years old when Elijah Muhammad took over the fledgling Nation of Islam, so when the Depression hit in the early 1930s, the Latter-day Saints had precedents, leadership systems, and relative stability to aid them. Latter-day Saints had tried a number of approaches to feeding the hungry throughout their history, including a massive grain storage program and innovative attempts on the part of the Relief Society to care for the poor. But as we shall see, the economic crisis of the 1930s was debilitating and required an even more systematic approach.

Early Efforts at Food Security

Shortly after settling in the Salt Lake Valley in 1847, Brigham Young instructed the Saints to store extra wheat as soon as they began to harvest successful crops. However, Church members were anxious to establish themselves by selling their crops and reinvesting their earnings back into their farms, so they generally ignored this instruction. Plagues of grasshoppers frequently destroyed crops, leaving nothing to save.[131] Saints also lost their crops when they briefly abandoned Salt Lake City and moved south in 1857 during the Utah War.[132] All of these factors meant that, by 1876, the Saints were well established but still not saving much wheat.[133] The railroad had reached Utah in 1869, and Brigham Young did not want to see the Saints trading with the expanding Gentile population, which he deeply distrusted. Young pleaded with the Saints to store food and grain against times of famine or personal disaster,[134] putting Emmeline B. Wells and the Relief Society in charge of wheat storage. The new Relief Society Central Grain Committee elected Wells as its president.[135]

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[131] Linda P. Wilcox and Davis Bitton, "Pestiferous Ironclads: The Grasshopper Problem in Pioneer Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 46, no. 4.

[132] James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-Day Saints*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 308; Donald R. Moorman and Gene Allred Sessions, *Camp Floyd and the Mormons: The Utah War* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992).

[133] "At the suggestion of President Brigham Young we would call the attention of the women of this Territory to the subject of saving grain. It is one important item which President Young has labored diligently to impress upon this people ever since their residence in these valleys. His advice has ever been to the brethren to cultivate the soil and let the mines, and mining speculations alone, for the grain was of more consequence than gold or silver. And these people are witnesses to that fact; practically having experienced the scarcity of provisions and especially of breadstuffs, in the earlier settlement of this country." Emmeline B. Wells, "Sisters, Be in Earnest," *Woman's Exponent*, October 15, 1876.

[134] Mangum and Blumell, *The Mormons' War on Poverty*, 66.

[135] Embry, "Relief Society Grain Storage Program, 1876–1940"; Jill Mulvay Derr et al., *Selected Relief Society Documents, 1842–1892*, 4.02; Susa Young Gates, "The Mission of Saving Grain," *The Relief Society Magazine*, February 1915; E. Cecil McGavin, "Grain Storage Among the Latter-Day Saints," *The Improvement Era*, March 1941.

Wells edited a paper for women in the Church called *The Woman's Exponent* and, as chair of the Central Grain Committee, used its pages to communicate instructions about wheat storage:

> To the women of this Territory, we make this appeal in all sincerity, and after most serious thought, on storing away grain while it is within their reach. We wish if it were possible, the subject might be agitated in public and private until every mother and every sister should feel the necessity of immediate action.[136]

Soon, Relief Societies throughout the Church were assembling caches of wheat, though with widely variant levels of success. Initially, Church members believed the Second Coming of Jesus Christ would be soon, and they stored wheat in large part as a means to survive the upheaval they believed would precede Christ's return.[137] At an early meeting organizing the effort to save grain, General Relief Society President Eliza R. Snow prophesied: "The Lord, through his prophet, has called on the mothers in Israel to prepare for a famine, which makes the subject we are called on to discuss a grave one. We are well assured that the time is fast approaching when the Lord will pour out His indignation on this country, and although we should escape, we will feel the effects of it in a National capacity."[138]

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[136] Emmeline B. Wells, "Be Wise and Hearken to Counsel," *Woman's Exponent*, November 1, 1876.
[137] "It is no doubt the best investment of means that could possibly be made, for if the prophecies of the Scriptures, both ancient and modern, and of Joseph Smith are to be fulfilled, which the Latter-day Saints profess to believe, there will be a desolating famine in the land; and if the women of this Territory will be wise, and hearken to the counsel given to them now, there is no doubt that the result will be an eminent success. If the means now on hand in the societies and women's associations can be turned into grain, and such measures taken to store it and preserve it from damp and all other things that would damage, or destroy it, as can be made practicable according to circumstances and advantages, then one point will be gained towards the temporal salvation of this people in case of emergency." Wells, "Sisters, Be in Earnest."
[138] "General Meeting of Central and Ward Committees," *Woman's Exponent* 5, no. 13 (December 1, 1876): 99.

Eventually, however, they felt they could share their wheat with Gentiles.[139] Relief Society wheat and other supplies were among the first sources of relief to reach San Francisco after the earthquake in 1906.[140] In 1907, the Relief Society sent wheat to China for famine relief (where it did not help since the Chinese did not eat wheat),[141] and in 1918, under pressure from both the U.S. government and the First Presidency, Relief Society leaders sold wheat to the government to ameliorate war-induced grain shortages.[142] But by the mid-1920s Relief Society sisters no longer actively stored wheat.[143] They either sent their wheat to a central storage facility in Salt Lake City or sold it and mailed the proceeds to the Relief Society wheat budget.[144] For almost fifty years, wheat gathering had been one of the Relief Society's major endeavors, so much so that the organization's emblem, which has endured since Jack Sears designed it in 1942, portrays a bundle of wheat.[145] Bronze bundles of wheat also decorate the outside of the Relief Society building, which was completed in 1956.[146]

Wheat storage was one major influence on the development of early food security programs—a prototype for what members would eventually call food storage—as was

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[139] Emmeline B. Wells, "The Grain Question," *Relief Society Bulletin*, September 1914.
[140] Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 166.
[141] Ibid.
[142] "Priesthood Quorum's Table," *The Improvement Era*, April 1923, cited in Embry, "Relief Society Grain Storage Program, 1876–1940".
[143] "General Discussion," *Relief Society Magazine*, June 1923.
[144] In 1939, after Church welfare was established, the First Presidency asked the Relief Society to convert their wheat funds back into actual wheat. Relief Society General Board, *Minutes of the General Board Meeting*, May 31, 1939, Church History Library, cited in Embry, "Relief Society Grain Storage Program, 1876–1940".
[145] Embry, "Relief Society Grain Storage Program, 1876–1940"; Connie Lamb, "Symbols of the LDS Relief Society," (unpublished manuscript, 2013), 5; Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 103–5, 165–66, 210–13, 291.
[146] Belle S. Spafford, "We Built as One," *Relief Society Magazine*, December 1956, 799–801.

visiting teaching. Pairs of women from Relief Society visited Church members during the Relief Society's earliest days in Nauvoo to ascertain and address the needs of the poor. These traveling pairs of women became known as visiting teachers. Members of the Relief Society continued to visit one another and minister to needs both spiritual and physical throughout the twentieth century, and the practice continues today.

In the decades before the Depression, Amy Brown Lyman sought to professionalize the roles of many of these women. Church president Joseph F. Smith called Lyman as general secretary of the Relief Society in 1913 and asked her to study social work, with the hope of improving the Church's current practices.[147] He named Lyman head of a new Relief Society Social Services Department in December 1918, shortly before his death.[148] Under Lyman's leadership, Latter-day Saint women learned to employ modern social work techniques for serving the hungry in their communities. These women became what scholar Dave Hall called "a veritable army of social work paraprofessionals." Their work also included improving infant and maternal mortality rates, a goal that interested thousands of Relief Society women who organized conferences to provide information on health and nutrition and to set up health clinics for pregnant women and new mothers.[149] Lyman was able to use national social work

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[147] Amy Brown Lyman, *In Retrospect: Autobiography of Amy Brown Lyman.* (Salt Lake City: General Board of Relief Society, 1945); Amy Brown Lyman, "Social Service Work in the Relief Society, 1917–1928, Including a Brief History of the Relief Society Social Service Department and Brief Mention of Other Relief Society and Community Social Service Activities," n.d., Lyman Collection, Box 1 fd. 17, p. 3, Perry Special Collections, cited in Dave Hall, "A Crossroads for Mormon Women: Amy Brown Lyman, J. Reuben Clark, and the Decline of Organized Women's Activism in the Relief Society," *Journal of Mormon History* 36, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 210.

[148] Dave Hall, "Anxiously Engaged: Amy Brown Lyman and Relief Society Charity Work, 1917–1945," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27, no. 3 (Summer 1994): 211.

[149] Hall, "A Crossroads for Mormon Women: Amy Brown Lyman, J. Reuben Clark, and the Decline of Organized Women's Activism in the Relief Society," 213.

training methods to pursue her agenda for the Church, and her work fit well with the objectives of the Progressive Era. That era, with its focus on social activism and education, was a time when Latter-day Saints were able to feel more camaraderie than usual with their fellow Americans.[150] However, the Great Depression curtailed this close association and brought into sharp relief how Latter-day Saints' views on the best solutions to poverty differed from the views of other Americans.

The Depression and Feeding the Hungry

Utah's economy was already suffering before the Depression hit because some of the industries that had fueled its expansion and growth during World War I (mining, transportation, and livestock) had languished in the 1920s. Moreover, family size was significantly larger for Latter-day Saints, so households had more mouths to feed. As economic opportunities worsened, many people went back to the land, subdividing existing farms and attempting to revive farms others had abandoned. Desperate to make a living, farmers made their lands vulnerable to erosion by overstocking cattle and overplanting soil. Statistics from the Farm Credit Administration, though ultimately inconclusive, suggest that Utah's farm mortgage delinquency rate was even higher than the Intermountain region's 1933 rate of 50 percent.[151] Unemployment was also soaring. By 1930, according to economist Garth Mangum and historian Bruce Blumell, only 33.5

[150] Matthew Bowman, *The Mormon People: The Making of an American Faith* (New York: Random House, 2012); Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 126.
[151] Mangum and Blumell, *The Mormons' War on Poverty*, 95–96.

percent of the state's adult population was employed, the worst record of any U.S. state save Mississippi.[152]

Residents of Utah received some government relief—enough to alarm LDS officials who fretted about creating a culture of dependency—but not enough to meet the growing economic crisis.[153] In the early 1930s, bishops and stake presidents worked to feed the hungry under their jurisdiction. Bishops had been ultimately responsible for the needy in their wards and had coordinated with Relief Society presidents throughout the decades, but by 1932 they saw the Depression rendering past systems inadequate. Members of the Salt Lake City Pioneer Stake were particularly hard hit, so their president, Harold B. Lee, found food and clothing through innovative means. Together Lee and his counselors established a storehouse building at 333 and 335 Pierpont Avenue in an unoccupied warehouse whose owners loaned the building without charge. The storehouse, filled with food donations, officially opened in August 1932. The stake called for a general fast that day, and members were invited to come to the storehouse with their fast offerings, or donations of money they saved by not eating.[154] Paying fast offerings was not a regular practice for many members of the Church during this time.[155] But

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[152] Ibid., 95.
[153] Ibid., 97.
[154] See chapter 3, "Eating with Each Other."
[155] Scholarly consensus states that fast days and offerings for the poor were not officially combined until the end of 1855 and early 1856. During this period plagues of grasshoppers, a drought, and a severe winter which killed half the cattle proved current offerings for the poor inadequate. Moreover, an influx of immigrants into the Salt Lake Valley meant that meager resources needed to be spread out among a rapidly growing population. Thus during this period Church leaders taught that on fast day, members were to donate the money they saved by fasting to those in need. Some wards held two fast days a month to gather adequate donations. Prior to this time both bishops and Relief Society leaders collected donations for the poor separate from fast days. By 1916, bishops were officially responsible for both collecting and recording donations. According to these records, fast offerings did not increase in proportion to Church population between 1916 and 1935. Records show a substantial increase in fast offerings paid during 1936, apparently

President Lee spoke a great deal about fast offerings and saw them as a crucial aspect of his attempts to care for the needy in the Pioneer Stake.[156] Consecrating the storehouse opening with a day of fasting created for members a direct emotional and intellectual link between going without food and feeding those who did not have adequate food. Church members who received storehouse provisions also fasted that day in a collective effort where secure Saints joined with the unemployed to ensure the self-sufficiency and well-being of their community overall. Fasting and welfare efforts thus continually united giver and receiver in a common effort.

Glen L. Rudd, a general authority, recalled in an oral history interview his early experiences of LDS welfare efforts. Rudd often heard Lee repeat a story from the earliest days of the storehouse around 1932. Farmers had a bumper crop of onions that year, but by the time they paid for workers to harvest the onions and for burlap bags in which to store them, the onions would cost more than customers could afford to pay. So the farmers harvested what they could on their own but left acres of onions in the ground to rot. Bishop Fred Heath was unemployed at the time, and he took trucks full of other unemployed men and dropped them at different farms to harvest the crops. They gave some of the onions to the farmers and brought many back to the storehouse. Rudd remembered, "Brother Lee told me—and also Bishop Drury told me this—that they had tons and tons of onions in the storehouse. Brother Lee used to laugh and say that the

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because Church leaders emphasized the fast offering as they introduced the new Church Welfare Program. Glen L. Rudd, interview by Bruce D. Blumell, 1975, The Glen L. Rudd Interviews, 58–63, Church History Library; Brigham H. Roberts, in *Conference Reports of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1913); H. Lester Peterson, "The Magnitude of the Fast Offerings Paid in the Stakes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1916–1936" (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1955), 17, 62–63.

[156] Rudd, The Glen L. Rudd Interviews, 18.

people in his stake ate onions for breakfast and lunch and for supper. He said, 'in those days we were the "strongest" stake in the church.'"[157] This story about abundant onions was one of Lee's favorites, not only because he found humor in so many people subsisting on onions, but also because it demonstrated the happy results of creativity and hard work. People ate the onions, and the storehouse traded onions for other vegetables. They were able to do this because otherwise unemployed men engaged in uplifting hard work.

Filling the storehouse always relied on creativity and hard work. "They did a lot of things to fill that storehouse," Rudd recalled. "For instance, a group of men went out on a rabbit hunt. They'd go out and kill two or three thousand rabbits and bring them in and put them at the disposal of the storehouse. This is the same storehouse where I went as a young teenage Aaronic Priesthood boy to take chickens from my father's business."[158] Men working to fill the warehouse also started to grow crops at nearby farms and bring those harvests to the warehouse. Fred Heath and Jesse Drury (the out-of-work Bishop Rudd mentioned above) drove south to Payson and Springville and north to Davis County to obtain seed potatoes and tomato plants to grow on a small farm between 900 and 1300 South in Salt Lake City; this was the first welfare production project. Heath and Drury also traveled as far north as Logan and as far south as Spanish Fork, helping farmers who couldn't afford to hire workers for the harvest. Rudd recalled, "Brother Heath and Bishop Drury would go talk to those people and get them to let the stake send unemployed men out to work, on a sharecropper basis. They were able to get together a

[157] Ibid., 5.
[158] Ibid., 20.

considerable amount of produce, fruit also, and they brought a lot in and it was distributed to the bishops then out to the people."[159] Once they had crops, they cobbled together a cannery. Sister Mary Colbert of the 26th Ward was the cannery's first manager. According to Rudd, "Sister Colbert was a very happy, jolly lady, a good worker, a strong woman, and she just put together what we might call the first cannery in this dispensation."[160] All these goods went out of the storehouse to needy families and individuals almost as fast as they came in.[161]

"Exclusive of Government Relief": The Rise of the Church Welfare Program

President Lee worried as much about the moral implications of people not working as he did about them having fuel and enough to eat. Rudd reflected on Lee's and other Church leaders' worries about idleness: "I might also say here that the great hunger in the world, then and today, is the hunger to be loved, to be trusted, to be appreciated, and to be understood. Brother Lee realized all of this and therefore taught the leaders under him to bless the people spiritually and remember these other hungers."[162] In addition to the work of filling and distributing food and supplies from the warehouse, President Lee set up additional work committees, getting members to cut down trees around people's homes and renovate various meetinghouses. They also looked out for the many widows in the stake. "All widows had work to be done around their homes, so the bishops would assign people to work cleaning their yards, mending their fences, repairing

[159] Ibid., 5.
[160] Ibid., 23.
[161] Ibid., 21.
[162] Ibid., 26.

their garages, and things like that," Rudd recalled.[163] People doing this work received warehouse goods or other support as compensation for their efforts. The Church might have supported its poor with a less complicated system of work and storehouses, but the more involved system that Lee was developing in his stake allowed him to offer a wider variety of support (such as widows receiving help around the house). And, most importantly to them, it allowed those who received financial assistance to support others. Able-bodied members receiving aid learned new skills, but they also felt useful.

The work systems instituted by Lee were soon to be adopted for the whole Church in an unprecedented, centralized expansion of LDS welfare efforts. Through this innovative model Latter-day Saints tried to save their own people, which was their primary goal. But a secondary goal was to show the world a better way. Early in 1936, LDS Apostle J. Reuben Clark publicly announced the Church's intention to "remove its 88,000 needy members from the public relief roles and launch cooperative work projects tending to make them self-supporting."[164] He chose to announce this in New York, not just to his own people but to the nation. The strategy linked directly to the Latter-day Saints' sense of chosenness and mandate to be a light to the world. Separatism via welfare was a strategy to save people temporally from poverty and spiritually from "the dole." Later in 1936, Clark spelled out the connection he saw between welfare and chosenness, quoting Puritan leader John Winthrop's famous 1630 speech aboard the *Arabella* at his October general conference talk on welfare. Clark taught, "The eyes of the

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[163] Ibid., 48.
[164] "LDS To Take 88,000 from the Relief Rolls, Clark Outlines Program," *Salt Lake Tribune*, May 25, 1936, cited in Mangum and Blumell, *The Mormons' War on Poverty*, 137.

world are upon us. . . . We are the city set upon a hill. If we should fail in this, and the Lord will not let us fail, great would be our condemnation."[165]

At the same conference, President Heber J. Grant told his people that the primary purpose of welfare "was to set up, in so far as it might be possible, a system under which the curse of idleness would be done away with, the evils of the dole abolished, and independence, industry, thrift, and self-respect be once more established amongst our people. The aim of the Church is to help the people help themselves. Work is to be re-enthroned as the ruling principle of the lives of our Church membership." [166] The term "re-enthroned" suggests that work had once ruled the Latter-day Saints and been venerated by them and needed to be again.

Welfare Square became the epicenter of LDS food security programs. Welfare Square occupied a large city block and was built between 1938 and 1939 by unemployed Latter-day Saints who had been receiving Church assistance. Initially, it consisted of a canning center, an administration headquarters, a storehouse, and a root cellar, much of which came from salvaged materials from a demolition project elsewhere in the city. The sale of Relief Society wheat paid for a 318,000-bushel grain elevator, completed in August 1940.[167]

The ideal of working even in the absence of paid employment became a central tenet of the new Church Welfare Program. A 1945 pamphlet on the history of Church welfare reiterates this point. The title itself insists on a vision of self-sufficiency: *Helping*

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[165] *Conference Report*, October 4, 1936, 114–15, quoted in Mangum and Blumell, *The Mormons' War on Poverty*, 136.
[166] *Conference Report*, October 4, 1936, 3, quoted in Mangum and Blumell, *The Mormons' War on Poverty*, 138.
[167] Mangum and Blumell, *The Mormons' War on Poverty*, 149.

Others to Help Themselves. But so does the description of an unemployed man: "Continued economic dependence breaks him, it humiliates him if he is strong, spoils him if he is weak," the pamphlet reads. "Sensitive or callused, despondent or indifferent, rebellious or resigned—either way, he is threatened with spiritual ruin, for the dole is an evil and idleness a curse."[168] As the Church taught, regardless of a person's character, receiving support without working for it posed a spiritual danger. Although they most often cited their own scripture, the Doctrine and Covenants, to warn against idleness, they also referred to the parable of the talents, in which the Lord reprimands the "wicked and slothful" servant who buried his talent.[169]

Although members of welfare work committees received storehouse goods in lieu of a salary, the program in its own less formal way reflected the belief systems that underpinned the Works Progress Administration (WPA),[170] but it started long before that. In 1930, the Church assisted 34,670 people for a short time through its local welfare initiatives and employment redirection, a 17 percent increase over the 29,000 that had benefited in 1929.[171]After J. Reuben Clark implemented the centralized Church Welfare Program in 1936, the institution began employing astonishing numbers of people. Latter-

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[168] The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Helping Others to Help Themselves: The Story of the Mormon Church Welfare Program* (Salt Lake City, 1945), 4, Church History Library.
[169] See, for example, L. Tom Perry, "But Be Ye Doers of the Word," *Ensign*, April 1977.
[170] For example, Franklin D. Roosevelt said to Congress in January 1935, "The lessons of history, confirmed by the evidence immediately before me, show conclusively that continued dependence upon relief induces a spiritual and moral disintegration fundamentally destructive to the national fiber. To dole out relief in this way is to administer a narcotic, a subtle destroyer of the human spirit. It is inimical to the dictates of sound policy. It is in violation of the traditions of America. Work must be found for able-bodied but destitute workers. The Federal Government must and shall quit this business of relief." Franklin D. Roosevelt, *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, vol. 4 (New York: Random House, 1938), 19–20, cited in Mangum and Blumell, *The Mormons' War on Poverty*, 126.
[171] Mangum and Blumell, *The Mormons' War on Poverty*, 100.

day Saints saw Church welfare as superior to government welfare primarily because they associated Church welfare with work and government aid with the nefarious "dole."

Latter-day Saints prized work, and their emphasis on work was evident in their rhetoric and their symbols. They called genealogical research "genealogy work," and missionary service was "missionary work." Even temple work during this time was treated as a welfare project; people who wanted temple rituals done for their ancestors would contribute food and cash to storehouses, and then those items would go directly to elderly persons who would perform the ancestors' sacred rituals by proxy in the temple.[172] They called these rituals "work." Settlers first entered Utah in 1857, and by 1858 they had chosen the beehive to represent their territory because it symbolized industriousness; when Utah achieved statehood in 1896, they kept the beehive on the state seal. When couples or unmarried women retired, instead of moving to Florida, they served a volunteer mission to perform work; *work* is even the term they used to describe the activity of eternity. What God does is work. Scriptures preached work and leaders preached work. Wicked people in the Book of Mormon are often described as being idle,[173] and the Doctrine and Covenants warns, "Wo unto you who will not labor with your own hands."[174] In contrast, one of the Book of Mormon's noblest figures is King Benjamin, who labored with his own hands instead of living off of taxes. God's people

[172] "LDS To Take 88,000 from the Relief Rolls, Clark Outlines Program," *Salt Lake Tribune*, May 25, 1936, cited in Mangum and Blumell, *The Mormons' War on Poverty*, 137.
[173] See, for example, 2 Nephi 5:24.
[174] Doctrine and Covenants 42:42.

were to be "anxiously engaged in a good cause."[175] And the Church Welfare Program required work: able-bodied members who received welfare assistance had to work.

Latter-day Saints may very well have inherited this celebration of work from the broader American ethos; they exhibited a devotion to work similar to what Weber noted among Protestants. But Weber claimed Protestants worked hard in pursuit of a success that would prove them as saved, while Latter-day Saints believed that the act of work itself was sanctifying.[176] For example, Weber wrote:

> A specifically bourgeois economic ethic had grown up. With the consciousness of standing in the fullness of God's grace and being physically blessed by him, the bourgeois businessman, as long as he remained within the bounds of formal correctness, as long as his moral conduct was spotless and the use to which he put his wealth was not objectionable, could follow his pecuniary interests as he would and feel that he was fulfilling a duty in doing so.[177]

Some Latter-day Saints, such as the Marriotts, the Huntsmans, or Stephen R. Covey in the 1970s and 1980s, have been seen as enjoying God's favor because of their wealth, but countless others with modest means were considered at least as righteous simply because they worked hard.

Even if Latter-day Saints absorbed their love of work from the broader community, they saw themselves as distinct. In a 1959 letter, General Church Welfare Committee chair Henry D. Moyle responded to an offer from the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization in Battle Creek, Michigan, for collaboration between the Church and the government office. Moyle rejected the offer on the grounds that Church and

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[175] Doctrine and Covenants 58:27.
[176] See David J. Cherrington, "Work, Role Of," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1856–57.
[177] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Digireads.com Publishing, 2010), 88.

government approaches to welfare were too different, and the Church had gone to great pains to develop a superior approach: "Our primary purpose was to set up, in so far as it might be possible, a system under which the curse of idleness would be done away with, the evils of a dole abolished, and independence, industry, thrift, and self-respect be once more established amongst our people. The aim of the Church is to help the people to help themselves."[178] Regardless of how government officials viewed their approach to welfare, LDS welfare officials knew they had to remain autonomous to avoid the error of government ways.

Later Church Farming Practices

In the thirty years after announcing the Church Welfare Program,[179] the Church bought orchards, farmland, and livestock, developing elaborate systems for Church volunteers and some paid employees to maintain its holdings. Leaders at the turn of the century had fought hard to keep Church members on their farms, but in the industrializing and urbanizing decades of the early twentieth century, they had given up. As early as 1909, the Church had begun several programs to help fill the moral and educational void for families who no longer lived on the farm. One of these, "Home Evening," sought to instill agrarian values during a time of urbanization.[180] But as late as 1937, one of the last standing hopefuls—Apostle John Widtsoe, who studied agriculture extensively—pled with members not to forsake agrarianism because of the moral character and spiritual lessons that farming instilled. He wrote,

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[178] Henry D. Moyle to Fred W. Kearn, June 3, 1959, 1 s 25 8 5, Church History Library.
[179] When the program was new, some people also referred to it as the Church Security Plan.
[180] Donald H. Dyal, "Mormon Pursuit of the Agrarian Ideal," *Agricultural History* 63, no. 4 (Fall 1989): 31.

> [The agrarian life] produces, it does not destroy. It gives; it does not take. It adds true wealth to the world storehouse; it enlarges the soul of the farmer. Read the history of our day. Crime is not bred in the fields of growing grain. Strong men are called from the farm, from the earth as the Lord gave it, from honest creed of toil, to correct the world's mistakes.[181]

While LDS leaders believed in the character-building potential of farming, they did not see it as a solution to widespread food security during and after the Depression. This marks an important distinction between federal programs and the efforts of both Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims. Federal "subsistence homesteading" initiatives, which tried to provide individual families with land on which to raise food, counted on technically advancing large-scale agriculture systems to take care of Americans in the long term and looked at small homesteading programs as a temporary way to provide for needy individuals. Henry Ford provided mandatory gardens for 50,000 of his employees in Detroit, and media celebrity Bernarr Macfadden used his journals *New York Graphic* (a tabloid) and *Liberty* to argue that a back-to-the-land movement was the solution to the unemployment crisis.[182] Franklin D. Roosevelt's advisors convinced him that commercial farms were already too productive to hire any more workers, but they compromised over the idea of "bringing the unemployed out of the cities to small towns or suburban areas where rent and food would be cheaper and where they could cultivate small plots of land for their own use."[183]

New Dealers thus believed in commercial agriculture as the long-term solution and these individual homesteads as providing relief during a time of transition. But

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[181] *Conference Report* (October 1937), 65–66, quoted in Dyal, "Mormon Pursuit of the Agrarian Ideal," 32.
[182] Dona Brown, *Back to the Land: The Enduring Dream of Self-Sufficiency in Modern America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 142.
[183] Ibid., 148.

because of their millenarian beliefs, neither Latter-day Saints nor Nation Muslims believed commercial agriculture would provide permanent security. The millenarian beliefs of each group were not identical. In 1978, Robert Clouse clarified a distinction between the kingdoms anticipated in millenarian (or premillennial) beliefs and millennial (or postmillennial) beliefs among Christians. He expanded on the vision that millenarians believed Christ would come and initiate a millennium, during which Satan would be bound, the wicked destroyed, and the righteous free to operate without interference for a thousand years. The Nation of Islam fits this model more than the other, in which Christ comes and judges the wicked after the thousand years, although Jesus would not be their Christ. In many ways, Fard functioned as their Christ.[184] In fact, the annual Nation event "Savior's Day" was a celebration of Fard. Later theorists, such as Sacvan Bercovitch, complicated these narratives to show that people could simultaneously entertain millenarian and millennial views,[185] which is a more apt description of the Latter-day Saints. Latter-day Saints believed both that Christ would come amidst destruction to initiate a millennial period, *and* that Saints had much work to do both before and during the millennium to prepare for Christ's final judgment. For the purposes of this chapter, what matters is that both groups imagined a future period of destruction against which they needed to store food. Initially, because of a Joseph Smith prophecy, Latter-day Saints thought this date would come by 1890, and Nation Muslims expected it during the early 1970s. Preparing for imminent destruction created a sense of urgency among Latter-

[184] Rubel, "The Nation of Islam," 7.
[185] Sacvan Bercovitch, "The Typology of America's Mission," *American Quarterly* 30 (1978): 37. For a more complete historiography, see Grant Underwood, "Early Mormon Millenarianism: Another Look," *Church History* 54, no. 2 (January 1985): 215–29.

day Saints, whom Brigham Young advised not to share their wheat stores because of the event's close proximity, and Nation Muslims, who carefully stored dried beans and water and sought to establish functioning farms in preparation. Latter-day Saints still store food today,[186] while Nation Muslims stopped with the death of Elijah Muhammad.

In any case, Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims worked to establish their *own* large-scale agricultural programs to benefit their people instead of emphasizing individual farming ventures or trusting national systems. Both groups had faith in advanced, efficient, large-scale farming efforts, but they wanted to run these ventures themselves in the hope that the farms would facilitate their survival when larger systems failed in the upcoming apocalypse. Even before that eventuality, however, both groups sought immediate communal self-sufficiency and wanted these farms to help them take care of their own.

A volunteer for one of these projects, Glenn Cox, agreed to oversee the welfare farm as a volunteer for his Hillside Stake in Salt Lake City. Cox supervised this work for thirty years. When he began in the early 1960s, he was in his middle twenties and had young children. Cox's job was to oversee cattle, and each ward sent men and young men twice a year to help him. Cattle who wouldn't bear calves left Cox's care the following year for the Church-run feedlot and butcher. Valuable cuts went to Church restaurants and institutions, like Brigham Young University, and the rest of the meat went for distribution at Welfare Square. When Cox and his companions produced more beef than their quota, they sold it for profit, paid taxes, and used those funds to buy new machinery

[186] Provident Living: Self-Reliance and Welfare Resources, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, http://providentliving.org/?lang=eng.

and supplies for the farm. Cox himself worked on the farm most Saturdays, letting his sons take turns to go with him.

The work demanded coordinated efforts from ordinary Latter-day Saint volunteers, most of whom knew little or nothing about ranching. Relief Society sisters from the assigned wards did not help on the ranch, but they met on Friday evenings to make lunches for the men to eat on Saturday afternoon. Cox told them one little sandwich would not be enough for men working that hard. Usually a lunch contained egg salad or tuna, fruit, and homemade cookies. Cox warned men to wear old shoes and their oldest clothes and shook his head when a teenager came in fancy new jeans or an attorney wore shiny leather shoes. The volunteers herded cattle onto trucks when it was time to move an hour away to the Kamas Valley for grazing. They mended fences and stacked bales of hay to feed the cows in winter. Different wards vied to work on everyone's favorite day, when volunteers administered injections, branded, and castrated new calves.

Cox retained his assignment overseeing the Hillside Stake Farm until the early 1990s, and also held volunteer callings such as elders quorum president, bishop, and stake high councilor during those decades. In the early 1990s, however, LDS leaders rearranged stake assignments for efficiency's sake, so members of a closer stake would do the work there. Cox agreed with the change but regretted it because of the good he thought it did for the men in his stake to perform service work on the cattle ranch. "I saw lives turned around," he remembered.[187]

[187] Glenn and Enid Cox, interview by Kate Holbrook, Salt Lake City, July 26, 2013.

As men worked on welfare farms, women discovered who in the Church community was hungry and saw to their particular needs. During the decades Glenn oversaw the cattle ranch, his wife Enid served as stake Relief Society president and twice as ward Relief Society president. Enid recalled that sometimes she would find out about a hungry parishioner from visiting teachers. More frequently, the bishop called to tell her that someone in the ward needed food. Enid would take a welfare form to the people's homes and fill it out with them. At the storehouse, members went up and down the aisles, like a supermarket, placing the requested foodstuffs and other items in their carts. At checkout, someone would ensure that items in the cart matched items specified on the list that had been preapproved by the Relief Society president. This process reflects an increasing professionalization of welfare relief efforts, a sign that welfare framed in terms of self-sufficiency became even more centralized after the Depression.

Although the LDS Church centralized and professionalized its welfare efforts during the Great Depression, creating one of the world's largest private welfare systems, the LDS ideal of self-sufficiency was still to exhaust all of one's own resources before leaning on the Church for support. To that end, Latter-day Saint leaders in the mid-twentieth century began emphasizing home food storage to an increasing degree. As we have seen, the LDS Church had engaged in large-scale efforts of its own in the form of wheat stores in the nineteenth century, but the focus in the twentieth century turned inward to the nuclear family.

Welfare leaders first began to talk about home food storage in 1941. In 1942, Harold B. Lee, recently called as an apostle, spoke in general conference about the need

for food storage. Lee advised members to collect a year's supply of foodstuffs, as much of it home grown as possible. Church welfare booklets of the time disseminated detailed estimates of how much food an individual required for a year, with suggestions on what to store and guidelines on how to store it to prevent spoilage.[188] A few times each decade in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, other Church leaders in general conference mentioned compiling a year's supply of goods. But leaders turned to the topic over fifty times in the 1970s and half that in the 1980s, after which such recommendations returned to previous levels of a few times per decade. This spike in the 1970s made many members believe a crisis was coming, and many emergency preparedness stores started up long the Wasatch Front (Utah's most populous area).[189]

The 1970s also saw increased talk about home gardens, which were a part of emergency preparedness and food-storage efforts. For example, in 1973, Lawrence Cummins, a research editor for the *Ensign* magazine, reviewed the history of victory gardens, which Americans (and Britons) planted during World War II to help feed the population. Cummins called for a resurgence of such efforts: "It is that same kind of gardening spirit, but perhaps for different reasons, that needs to be cultivated again today. . . . Together with the home storage program that we have been cautioned to maintain, our own fresh vegetables would help relieve the deadly monotony of subsisting on stored foods only in case of a crisis."[190] Members made home gardens an important part of self-sufficiency because they taught a good work ethic, provided well-priced nutritious food,

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[188] Mangum and Blumell, *The Mormons' War on Poverty*, 150.
[189] Ibid., 161.
[190] Lawrence E. Cummins, "Thanks for the Zucchini," *Ensign*, May 1973.

and maintained skills that people would need to feed themselves when crisis interrupted the efficient production and transportation of food to which Americans were accustomed. Church leaders would not preach agrarianism again until Church president Spencer W. Kimball urged members to grow gardens. Kimball also taught members to garden for spiritual reasons. Recalling his childhood labors, he said,

> As a boy I saw how all, young and old, worked and worked hard. We knew that we were taming the Arizona desert. But had I been wiser then, I would have realized that we are [sic] taming ourselves, too. Honest toil in subduing sagebrush, taming deserts, channeling rivers, helps to take the wildness out of man's environment but also out of him.[191]

Church articles on gardening frequently referenced Spencer Kimball's counsel to plant a garden. In his April 1976 general conference talk, Kimball, who was then president of the Church,[192] emphasized the link between self-sufficiency and individual preparedness and specified home gardens as part of that preparedness:

> We encourage you to grow all the food that you feasibly can on your own property. Berry bushes, grapevines, fruit trees—plant them if your climate is right for their growth. Grow vegetables and eat them from your own yard. Even those residing in apartments or condominiums can generally grow a little food in pots and planters. Study the best methods of providing your own foods.[193]

The 1978 Church songbook for children has only one song about gardening, in which the gardener raises flowers and ennobling thoughts.[194] The next songbook, first published in 1989, has a song about gardening to raise food, entitled, "The Prophet Said to Plant a

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[192] Kimball served as Church president from 1973 until his death in 1985.
[193] Spencer W. Kimball, "Family Preparedness," *Ensign*, May 1976.
[194] Maryhale Woolsey, "I Have a Garden," in *Sing with Me* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), G-18.

Garden."[195] The song substitution represents the emphasis on gardening for food that had become sufficiently ingrained in the culture by the 1980s for someone to write a song about it and for that song to be published in an official collection. The song's title probably intentionally left which prophet up to the imagination. Certainly, Brigham Young told people to garden. But so did Kimball's successor, Ezra Taft Benson, who had served as Secretary of Agriculture during the Nixon administration.[196] During the 1970s and 1980s, Church members engaged gardening and food storage as lively and popular topics.

A Nation in Pursuit of Food Security

The Nation of Islam also pursued self-sufficiency through growing and storing food. Many of the Nation's funds went not to farms but to raising buildings during the 1960s and 1970s. Otherwise, their farms might have produced more food. Nonetheless, the Nation paid members to live and work on farms. In Michigan, they established a cannery, and they sent Agieb Bilal, the national assistant secretary who oversaw the farms, to take courses in agriculture and animal husbandry at Michigan State Agricultural Extension. Nation Muslims also pursued self-sufficiency through alternative food systems, such as the whiting fish the Nation purchased in 1974, and through supporting Nation Muslims' private businesses. These business ventures and budding food

[195] Mary Jane McAllister Davis, "The Prophet Said to Plant a Garden," in *Children's Songbook of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989), 237.
[196] See for example Ezra Taft Benson, "Prepare for the Days of Tribulation," *Ensign*, October 1980. Benson spoke explicitly of members needing to heed this council because of the present recession.

distribution systems contributed to the Nation's status as an independent, self-sufficient nation within the nation.

Elijah Muhammad and the Drive for Self-Sufficiency

Elijah Muhammad must have known the value of owning land from his earliest years. His parents were former slaves and worked as sharecroppers on a cotton plantation near Sandersville, Georgia. Born Elijah Poole in 1897 as one of thirteen children, Elijah attended school until he was nine, when he left to work in the fields and on the railroad. As a young teenager, he saw an African American man lynched for ostensibly insulting a white woman. When he was eighteen, he earned eight dollars a month working long days for a farmer who "regularly whipped the wives of his African-American workers at gunpoint." He saw his second lynching, after which the body was dragged behind a truck, when he was twenty-three, and he couldn't get it out of his mind.[197] He married Clara Belle Evans on March 7, 1919, and they moved with their two children to Detroit in 1923[198]—away, he hoped, from the lynchings that haunted him.[199] In this move, Elijah became part of the first "Great Migration" of African Americans from the rural South to the increasingly urbanized North. In 1890, 90 percent of the African American population had lived in the South, but an early twentieth-century exodus brought more than 2.5

[197] Herbert Berg, *Elijah Muhammad and Islam* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 32.
[198] Evanzz, *The Messenger*, 450.
[199] For background on the lives of free African Americans in the late nineteenth-century south, see William E. Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree: The African-American Church in the South, 1865–1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 210.

million blacks to the North. Many of them, like Elijah and Clara, settled in rapidly growing urban areas.[200]

In Detroit, Poole worked on an assembly line for Ford, the company that pioneered assembly-line production about a decade before he arrived. By the time he met W. D. Fard, Poole had farmed other people's land and worked on assembly lines. When he later taught the importance of self-reliance, working your own land, and owning your own business, he spoke as one who had lived the unstable and contingent alternative. He also spoke as one who knew poverty. During the 1920s and 1930s, he and Clara struggled to feed their growing family of eight children in the face of intermittent unemployment and Elijah's alcoholism. For himself and his people, Elijah Poole wanted something more.

W. D. Fard left the Nation of Islam movement in 1934, and by the time Elijah Muhammad went to prison in the early 1940s, Muhammad had established his group as the most significant of the splinter groups that resulted from Fard's departure.[201] But ambition, distrust, and betrayal took a toll; his faction was small. Police used the University of Islam (schools Clara started for children) as an excuse to arrest him and others, and one of his rivals put out a five hundred–dollar contract on his life.[202] To escape his enemies, he moved in 1935 to Madison, Wisconsin, and then to Chicago. Leaving his family in Chicago, he went to Milwaukee, then Washington, D.C. He used aliases to establish new temples while he was in hiding, but FBI officials arrested him for

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[200] Albert J. Raboteau, *Canaan Land: A Religious History of African Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 82.
[201] Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*, 276.
[202] Clegg, *An Original Man*, 36–37. See also Berg, *Elijah Muhammad and Islam*, 37.

draft evasion and sedition in 1942. Clara Muhammad and a few of Elijah's trusted colleagues kept the movement together throughout his incarceration (1942–1946), but it lost ground. While membership under Fard was around eight thousand people, the movement numbered perhaps half that by 1946.[203] But a call through community talks, newspaper articles, and radio broadcasts to honor the "original black man" and encourage his descendants toward self-sufficiency would bring those numbers back up again.

A Sovereign Nation: Self-Sufficiency as a Separatist Endeavor

While Elijah Muhammad was struggling to build (and rebuild) the Nation of Islam, the nation of America was struggling through the Depression and World War II. In its efforts to cultivate economic stability, the United States did not worry much about the needs of African Americans. When Elijah Muhammad was unemployed in 1929 and 1930, the private local charities that attempted to cope with the massive needs of the early Depression were overwhelmed, and blacks were not a priority. The needs were so great that, between 1929 and 1932, a third of those charities failed for financial reasons. "Mothers' pension" programs operated in all but two states by 1933, but they predominately gave aid to the children of white widows, so early Nation Muslims would have been unlikely to receive any such aid.[204] Some WPA programs began in 1933 and 1935 saw the instigation of national programs, including Social Security and a national

[203] Berg, *Elijah Muhammad and Islam*, 37–39. See also Clegg, *An Original Man*, 89–93.
[204] Three percent of "Mothers' Pension" recipients were black. Mark H. Leff, "Consensus for Reform: The Mothers'-Pension Movement in the Progressive Era," *Social Service Review* 47, no. 3 (September 1973): 414.

welfare system, but thousands of African Americans suffered hunger despite these reforms.[205]

Elijah Muhammad felt the Nation could not trust any programs run by white oppressors, so he developed his own systems in response. The postwar boom had resolved many financial exigencies for white Americans, but African Americans still lived with the specter of hunger. Elijah Muhammad encouraged entrepreneurialism as an antidote, and his followers responded with gusto. After Elijah Muhammad's prison term, the Nation opened various businesses in Chicago, many of them centered around food: the Shabazz restaurant, a bakery, and a grocery store. He taught Nation Muslims to "do for self." By the 1950s, the movement had also opened "a laundry, cleaning plant, haberdashery, dress shop, and automobile repair and paint shop."[206] By the time the Nation's newspaper *Muhammad Speaks* began publication in 1960, ads for businesses owned either by the Nation or its members filled the paper's pages.

Nation Muslims' critiques of American society were sharp. The Nation was called a nation because it sought to become one—an independent nation existing within the United States. Members frequently attended schools that would teach the skills they needed to flourish as an independent nation; they emphasized practical trades such as barbering, brick masonry, carpentry, welding, auto mechanics, and shoe repair. Some also learned a trade while in prison for draft evasion.[207] College-bound Nation men

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[205] Walter I. Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State: A History of Social Welfare in America*. 6th ed. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007), 283.
[206] Michael Angelo Gomez, *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 295.
[207] Adib Rashad, *Elijah Muhammad and the Ideological Foundation of the Nation of Islam* (Hampton, Va.: U.B. & U.S. Communications Systems, 1994), 200.

during these years planned to major in business, agriculture, or engineering.[208] By contrast, college-bound female graduates of Chicago's University of Islam between 1962 and 1965 most often studied teaching, home economics, and nursing. Some women also went to school to acquire secretarial skills. But more often women tended to earn money with skills they already had, working as domestic laborers, taking in lodgers, sewing clothing, and selling home-cooked meals.[209]

Their motivation for independence was the corruption of current American society combined with their understanding of the imminent destruction of the white race. Nation Muslims had to prepare for nationhood not only because white society was so inhospitable to them but also because white society and its systems would soon be destroyed. John F. Kennedy's assassination in 1963 and other difficulties within the Nation itself, including Malcolm X's departure the following year, reinforced many Nation Muslims' belief that the old world was coming to its end.[210] Elijah Muhammad's warnings about the fall of America became more frequent, such as in his 1964 Savior's Day Speech, "Our Day is Near at Hand." In a 1965 *Muhammad Speaks* article, he wrote: "The day of decision between the dark races or nations was begun by God Himself in the Person of Master Fard Muhammad . . . as is prophesied in the Bible: 'Multitudes in the valley of decision, for the day (before or by 1970) of the Lord is near in the valley of

[208] "Muslim School Grads Go on to Nation's Top Colleges," *Muhammad Speaks*, July 30, 1965, quoted in Curtis, *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam, 1960–1975*, 154–55.
[209] Rashad, *Elijah Muhammad and the Ideological Foundation of the Nation of Islam*, 201.
[210] Lee, *The Nation of Islam*, 43.

decision.' Joel 3:16."[211] The Nation's salvation would come through farming and self-sufficiency.

Nation-al Farming Ideals and Practices

Elijah Muhammad began to consider seriously the Nation's economic and agricultural prospects while he was still in prison in the 1940s; possibly the prison's own agricultural practices influenced his interest. Directing the movement's business affairs through letters his wife Clara disseminated to his ministers, Muhammad ordered his followers to start collecting money to buy a farm.[212] In 1945, roughly a year before he was released from prison, the Nation purchased a 140-acre farm in White Cloud, Michigan.[213] Within thirty years, the Nation owned "5000 acres of farmland in Georgia, 1000 acres in Michigan, and 9000 acres in Alabama. These working farms produced corn, string beans, apples, tomatoes, okra, soybeans, and various grains and raised chickens, cows, and sheep."[214] Elijah Muhammad wanted the farming ethos to extend beyond the central organization of the Nation of Islam and into the individual lives of its members. He taught,

> There are millions of your dollars lying in the white man's banks doing nothing for anyone. Put these millions of dollars to work buying farmland, since this is the basis of independence. Raise cotton, corn, wheat, rye, rice, chicken, cattle, and sheep. The sheep would clothe us with its wool and feed us with its flesh. The cow would also serve as food for us, as well as his hide being used in making shoes, belts, jackets, coats and hats. The cotton could be woven into cloth.[215]

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[211] Ibid., 45.
[212] Clegg, *An Original Man*, 154.
[213] Gomez, *Black Crescent*, 294.
[214] Vibert L. White, *Inside the Nation of Islam: A Historical and Personal Testimony by a Black Muslim* (Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida, 2001), 179.
[215] Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman in America*, 200.

Everything produced on a farm was useful, and it all led to self-sufficiency.

Elijah Muhammad's praise of farmland as "the basis of independence" is significant, and Jeffersonian. Thomas Jefferson argued that U.S. culture should be rooted in agriculture, which he praised as the key to independence and virtue.[216]. The forebears of many Nation Muslims had been barred from owning land either by slavery, crushing economic circumstances, or oppressive social structures; as Elijah Muhammad wrote, "We have not been given anything but hell in return for 400 years of hard labor, sweat and blood, without justice."[217] Historian Michael Gomez explains that land ownership has been of crucial significance throughout the world: "The control of land equates with sovereignty and is critical to the question of who is in position to make determinative decisions regarding the meaning, quality, and direction of life."[218] Through collective farming, Nation Muslims planned at last to be the beneficiaries of their own efforts—to own the land and enjoy its fruits.

The Nation's emphasis on land ownership was particularly resonant among Elijah Muhammad's followers in the mid-twentieth century. Black nationalism was an almost wholly urban movement that took hold during the Great Migration, when hundreds of thousands of southern blacks left the rural environment they had grown up in. Even while they celebrated the new freedoms they had in the North, they might also have mourned the loss of a rural way of life. Some African Americans used the phrase "under our own

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[216] Susan Sessions Rugh, *Our Common Country: Family Farming, Culture, and Community in the Nineteenth-Century Midwest* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 4.
[217] Elijah Muhammad, "Mr. Muhammad Speaks," *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 11, 1958, quoted in Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*, 92.
[218] Gomez, *Black Crescent*, 323.

vine and fig tree" from Micah 4:4 after the Civil War as an agricultural vision of wholeness.[219]

Perhaps Elijah Muhammad was influenced by the ideas of Booker T. Washington, who provided agricultural training at Tuskegee Institute. Some African Americans were forced to live on the land and found it impossible to romanticize, but Washington argued that agriculture and self-sufficiency were essential for black advancement insofar as household self-sufficiency was the best strategy to escape sharecropping. Tuskegee sponsored mobile farmers' institutes that encouraged southern black farmers to embrace the tenets of back-to-the-land philosophy, which included diversifying crops, staying out of debt, and producing food and clothing at home. Washington spoke lovingly of his own gardens. He taught that the person in the country who raised his own food "is master of all, and . . . can say what shall take place and what shall not take place." Washington was convinced, as were his white back-to-the-land compatriots, that self-sufficiency in food production was crucial to independence.[220]

Nation Muslims thus linked farming their own land to independence—or more specifically, to freedom from white influence or interference. A two-page spread in *Muhammad Speaks* in 1968 expressed the ideal relationship between farming and entrepreneurialism, represented as cooperation between admirable, fit men.[221] On the left page, an appealing black man wearing a straw farmer's hat, a blue shirt, and overalls shakes hands with a good-looking black man on the right page, who wears a dark

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[219] Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree*.
[220] Booker T. Washington, "A Sunday Evening Talk," October 28, 1906, in *Booker T. Washington Papers*, 9:109, quoted in Brown, *Back to the Land*, 50–51.
[221] "Image of Farmer and Businessman Shaking Hands," *Muhammad Speaks*, March 8, 1968.

business suit with a white shirt and red tie. This is not a "subsistence homestead," but one large enough to produce food for a great many people. Behind the farmer are a barn, the bare earth, and some grazing animals, while the businessman stands in front of the tall buildings of an urban center. But between the businessman and the buildings are rows of plants. The two men meet on a dirt road that runs along the gutter between the periodical's pages. A tractor drives along the road. Elijah Muhammad's photograph sits at the top of the spread, also spanning the gutter.

This spread defines both business and farming as necessary to create a thriving Nation. Under Elijah Muhammad's photo, both the farmer and the businessman appear to enjoy the approval of their leader. Despite *Muhammad Speaks*'s implicit endorsement of both city and country life, however, rural endeavors are visually prioritized in the scene: The two men meet on the dirt road where the tractor drives. There are crops in the photo of city buildings. This slight emphasis on farming over city work demonstrates the importance that Elijah Muhammad placed on land cultivation in official messaging for the Nation. A thriving community required both enterprise and farming; however, this spread suggests that, without farming, city work could not flourish.

Elijah Muhammad wanted black farms eventually to become capable of feeding and clothing every African American in the country. The millenarian impulse to prepare for disaster that was inherent in that goal might explain why the newspaper spread slightly favored the farm even as it celebrated the necessity for cooperation between

black men in the country and those in the city.[222] The front page of that issue also demonstrates the urgency of official Nation messages about farming. It displays a picture of a cannery and a processing plant with a train running alongside them. Looming over these images are enormous jars of beans, carrots, peas, beets, and other produce, with the closest bearing the label, "The farm is first." This entire scene appears under the large caption, "Can we survive? How strong is the foundation?" Images like these idealized farm life at the same time they engendered a sense of unease about the current state of the Nation. Readers must have seen this rural vision as an ideal that did not yet exist for them.

Although the Nation started purchasing farmland in the 1940s, working out the details of its agricultural vision was a long process. As late as 1971, an ad in *Muhammad Speaks* ran under the title "Wanted: farmers." The ad asked for anyone ("cattle raisers, chicken raisers, food raisers") with knowledge and experience in farming to contact the messenger[223] in Chicago. "We want experienced Black farmers to help us and advise us how to farm in the best interest for our Black people. . . . Jobs are now waiting for you to teach and train your people to farm."[224] But allocating money to support the Nation's farming ventures was an even bigger problem than finding people to work the land. Rashid Nuri took over management of the Nation's Georgia farm in 1975, a few months

[222] For an analysis of The Nation of Islam as a millenarian movement, see Lee, *The Nation of Islam, an American Millenarian Movement*.
[223] "The messenger" referred to Elijah Muhammad. Fard was God, and Muhammad was his messenger.
[224] "Wanted: Farmers," *Muhammad Speaks*, June 11, 1971.

after Elijah Muhammad's death.[225] The Nation by this point had active farms in Michigan and Georgia. In the years preceding Nuri's assumption of the farm management in 1975, the farm had accrued debt, in large part because those working on the venture did not receive adequate money from the Nation to make it successful. Even after 1975, lack of funding was Nuri's biggest challenge.[226] During his three-year tenure, he managed several other families who also lived and worked on the farm. Nuri and his fellows raised enough food to feed themselves, with their husbandry including dairy and beef cattle, chickens, and various crops. Earl Pafha, who ran their cannery, canned all of their extra food and sent it to Chicago to distribute to the hungry.[227] They also sold some of the food they raised at farmers' markets in Atlanta. White neighbors continually attempted to take over the Nation's land. Nuri managed to raise enough money to pay off debts and keep the land until the Nation lost it following the probate of Elijah Muhammad's estate; he considers this his greatest contribution to that farm.

Nuri's story demonstrates the extent to which Nation Muslims internalized and worked to realize Elijah Muhammad's vision of self-sufficiency. Nuri joined the Nation in 1969, midway through earning his A.B. in political science at Harvard University. At Harvard he wanted to learn about effective nation-building, but he felt his degree taught him little that was relevant for establishing a black nation. In thinking through how best to build up a nation, he decided agriculture was a crucial element of that process (and the

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[225] Rashid Nuri, telephone interview by Kate Holbrook, August 19, 2013. Cornelius Williams and Abdus Salaam ran the farm in Michigan. Before Elijah Muhammad's death, they raised crops, cattle, and chickens. After his death, the farm fell into ruin. "Truth About the Muslim Farm," parts 1–6, www.youtube.com.
[226] Rashid Nuri, *Salaam Agricultural Systems 1976 Year End Report* (Bronwood, Ga.: World Community of Islam, January 15, 1977).
[227] Nuri, interview, August 19, 2013.

element most interesting to him). By the time he started work on the farm in Georgia, he was in his late twenties, had earned an M.S. in plant and soil science form the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and had four children. Hazel, his wife, lived with him and spent her time both looking after the children and serving as matriarch for the other laborers and families who worked there. Despite the challenging conditions they faced, the Nuris worked to make the farm a success because they believed in Elijah Muhammad's vision of a self-sufficient black nation and agreed that farming was crucial to achieving that goal. When Elijah Muhammad died, the Nation had plenty of land and money. But contests over his estate depleted it all, resulting in the loss of the Georgia land. As his heirs and would-be heirs divided up their inheritances in the late 1970s, they sold the property.[228] Bilal reports, "In June, 1976, the NOI balance sheet showed $16 million USD in assets. By the time of the end of the Probate Case, in 1987 - our Community owed $12 million in legal fees, taxes, etc., based on adverse court decisions."[229]

A Blueprint for Economic Success

Elijah Muhammad conveyed his movement's major goals and plans through clarity and repetition. The back page of *Muhammad Speaks* consistently printed the article "The Muslim Plan" with the subheadings "What the Muslims Want" and "What the Muslims Believe." His plans outlined what Nation Muslims could do to contribute both to their individual improvement and to Nation-building, where *Nation* referred to the

[228] Rashid Nuri, telephone interview by Kate Holbrook, June 3, 2013.
[229] Agieb Bilal, e-mail message to Kate Holbrook, February 22, 2014.

Nation of Islam. During the 1950s, Elijah Muhammad developed what he called an "Economic Blueprint,"[230] which consisted of five principles and appeared from time to time in various newspapers. The Economic Blueprint taught:

1. Know thyself and yourself. Islam makes a true Brother to [every other] Brother. . . . Acknowledge and recognize you are a member of the Creators [i.e., the black] Nation, and act accordingly. . . . Recognize the necessity for unity. . . . This requires action and deeds, not words and lip service.
2. Pool your resources, physically as well as financially.
3. Stop wanton criticism of everything that is black-owned and black-operated.
4. Keep in mind—*Jealousy Destroys From Within.*
5. Observe the operations of the white man. He is successful. He makes no excuses for his failures. He works hard—in a collective manner. You do the same.[231]

These five principles focused on black people. Principles 1–4 were about the way black Americans should relate to one another in pursuit of economic prosperity; Muhammad wanted them to perceive themselves as loving siblings. They should work together, avoid criticizing one another, and resist jealousy. Economic advancement was decidedly

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[230] Steven Balkin, *Self-Employment for Low-Income People* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1989), 79.
[231] Elijah Muhammad, "Economic Blueprint," *Los Angeles Herald-Dispatch*, January 16, 1960. See also, Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*, 87. In the 1950s Elijah Muhammad had a column in the *Pittsburgh Courier* that raised both sales and controversy. After S. B. Fuller purchased a controlling interest in the paper and dropped the column in 1959, Elijah Muhammad's words appeared in the weekly *Los Angeles Herald-Dispatch*, which through the alliance with the Nation achieved a circulation of 40,000 a week. The "Economic Blueprint" appeared in most issues. *Muhammad Speaks* began publication in May 1960. Although the movement estimated the paper's circulation at 500,000, Leon Forrest, an early editor who was not Muslim, thought actual circulation was closer to 70,000. See Curtis, *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam, 1960–1975*, 191–93.

communal. White people came into the discussion only in point number five—not as a threat, but as a model. Where whites were successful, Nation Muslims should study those successes and seek to achieve the same.

Elijah Muhammad himself observed and emulated white prosperity in his preaching of self-sufficiency and his delineation of a program for economic success. Alfred 11X Diggs wrote in *Muhammad Speaks* of his gratitude for this financial guidance. He explained that before the messenger (Elijah Muhammad) came, "We knew how to raise crops, but we didn't know what to do with those crops we raised. Some of us have a little money but we did not know how to invest it." To his celebration of Elijah Muhammad's teachings, Diggs added, "We are raising crops and supplying our brothers and sisters with the foodstuffs to keep our people alive."[232]

In the early decades of the Nation of Islam, most new members were poor. By the late 1950s, however, members of the middle class were joining the movement. A newspaper account of his 1960 Savior's Day address reported that Elijah Muhammad urged black professionals "to unite under his leadership with their various skills for the goal of the total Black Nation." The leader implored, "'Let's unit [*sic*] into a great nation, Get behind me you professional people. Back me up. . . . If I had one million Negroes behind me today the other nineteen million in the United States would be free tomorrow.'" In return, the Nation encouraged believers to support black-owned

[232] Alfred 11X Diggs, "The Proper Perspective," *Muhammad Speaks*, September 6, 1974.

businesses and invited black entrepreneurs to participate in Nation-sponsored Afro-Asian bazaars.[233]

Another key articulation of Elijah Muhammad's goals was the Three-Year Savings Plan, which started in the early 1960s. When describing his "Economic Savings Program," Elijah Muhammad said it would "help fight unemployment, abominable housing, hunger, and nakedness of the 22 million black people here in America."[234] He urged members to send in at least five cents from their earnings each day to conquer poverty and want among his people. The foremost goal was to save enough money to buy land to feed all black people in America. After buying the land they would build storage warehouses.[235] Banking independence was another part of the plan. As Muhammad wrote to his followers:

> I am appealing to you—each and every one of the 22 million black people of America—to send every penny, nickel, dime, dollar, hundreds of dollars and millions of dollars that you can spare to the "Three-Year Economic Plan". . . . When our mark of $1 million is accomplished, we are going to build a national reserve bank for the black people of America.[236]

Though the plan maintained its name throughout Elijah Muhammad's lifetime (and under Louis Farrakhan today), the three-year aspect became irrelevant. Members sent in their checks. Nation leadership used the money to buy, among other things, an enormous

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[233] Bazaars generally included dinner and display booths with goods for sale. The advertisement for one such bazaar described an evening at a Baltimore mosque: "Businessmen and organizations will sponsor displays at 35 booths and a dinner will be served at the affair which will last from 4 until 10 p.m." "Muslims Plan Afro Bazaar," *Baltimore Afro-American*, April 15, 1967.
[234] Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman in America*, 192.
[235] Ibid., 193.
[236] Ibid., 201.

shipment of whiting fish that Nation Muslims sold door to door.[237] Whiting fish furthered the attempt to develop food systems outside the mainstream American markets. A headline in *Muhammad Speaks* proclaimed, "Muhammad's fish sales take Black man's mouth out of white man's kitchen."[238] Members purchased the fish from the Nation, then resold it on their own.

Good, old American thrift was an additional aspect of Elijah Muhammad's food production and economic vision. As Adib Rashad (a.k.a. James Miller) has noted, "the Honorable Elijah Muhammad's economic program for the deliverance and salvation of the African-American was in essence, nothing but pure American Calvinism."[239] By "pure American Calvinism," Rashad probably referred to the Nation's values of thrift and hard work. Elijah Muhammad instructed members to delay gratification—to pursue education and professional training, and not to buy expensive cars and clothing before they had saved enough to buy a respectable home. He taught members to "feed [their] own stomachs." Presumably he meant by this that they could save money by cooking their own food and avoiding expensive industrialized products or dining in restaurants owned by white people. He said, "Stop spending money for tobacco, dope, cigarettes, whiskey, fine clothes, fine automobiles. . . . If you must have a car, buy the low-priced car. . . . We must make a better future for ourselves and our children."[240]

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[237] Charles 67X, "Muslims Import Over Two Million Pounds of Fresh Fish," *Muhammad Speaks*, March 1, 1974.
[238] Joe Walker, "Muhammad's Fish Sales Take Black Man's Mouth out of White Man's Kitchen," *Muhammad Speaks*, March 1, 1974. See also Charles 67X, "Muslims Import Over Two Million Pounds of Fresh Fish."
[239] Rashad, *Elijah Muhammad and the Ideological Foundation of the Nation of Islam*, 199.
[240] Elijah Muhammad, "Mr. Muhammad Speaks," *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 16, 1958; Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*, 86.

Significant aspects of Calvinism did not apply to the Nation, however, such as the use temporal prosperity to prove sanctification. African Americans had too little opportunity to achieve financial success for wealth to have made sense as proof of divine favor. For that matter, too many evil (slave-holding, raping, murdering) "white Devils" were wealthy for an equation between wealth and righteousness to have worked in their minds. Weber understood Calvinism to be focused on individual success,[241] whereas Elijah Muhammad taught believers to pool their resources and to achieve financial success for their community—by buying from Nation-owned businesses and contributing to a common savings fund.

The movement overall promoted upward mobility. Early followers most frequently joined the movement in poverty, but many testified that membership improved their economic and employment situations. For some, this was because other members helped them to find jobs. Others credited Islam and Elijah Muhammad with giving them the knowledge, attitudes, or confidence necessary to get and hold onto a job. Still others explained that Islam taught them to aspire to a more comfortable lifestyle.[242] Middle-class Americans did not really begin to join the movement until the late 1950s.[243]

Elijah Muhammad taught his followers to work hard and to be on time. Many Nation Muslims believed they were hired more readily than other African Americans because of their well-known work ethic. Sociologist Erdmann D. Beynon's early

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[241] "Calvinism opposed organic social organization in the fiscal-monopolistic form which is assumed in Anglicanism under the Stuarts, especially in the conceptions of Laud, this alliance of Church and State with the monopolists on the basis of a Christian, social ethical foundation. . . . Over against it they placed the individualistic motives of rational legal acquisition by virtue of one's own ability and initiative." Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 89.
[242] Curtis, *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam, 1960–1975*, 26, 200.
[243] Clegg, *An Original Man*, 251.

observations about Nation Muslims, published in 1937, reflect the belief that their abstemious habits did enhance their financial circumstances:

> The ascetic manner of life of the [Muslims] also has contributed to their economic improvement. No money whatever is spent by them on liquor, tobacco, or pork. There [*sic*] one meal of the day consists almost entirely of vegetables and fruits. Consequently their expenditure on food is significantly smaller than that of other Negroes.[244]

Nation Muslims had the sense that all this work would benefit the community at large. "Rather than pursuing wealth for personal gain, wealth was pursued for the common good," observed Yvonne Haddad, a scholar of Islam. "Prosperity was not in what others could see; it was in economic programs that helped all black people. Social mobility was reframed and aimed to deriving personal gratification from within the Nation."[245] Those who bought and sold fish and newspapers did so to support the Nation's programs. Stanley Johnson, who won an award for selling *Muhammad Speaks* in high numbers, used to tell potential customers that they would contribute to the uplift of all black men by buying the paper.[246]

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[244] Eileen T. Bender, "The Woman Who Came to Dinner: Dining and Divining a Feminist 'Aesthetic,'" *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 12, no. 3 (1986): 906; Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*, 86.

[245] Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, "Islam, Women, and the Struggle for Identity in North America," in *Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America*, ed. Rosemary Skinner Keller and Rosemary Radford Ruether, vol. 2 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 612.

[246] Curtis, *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam, 1960–1975*, 140. Because members spent their own money on fish and newspapers, they kept the proceeds of items they had sold. Bilal recalls, "It was 'suggested' that each brother in the FOI [Fruit of Islam] take 300 papers each week. We purchased them and had to sell them. That is why we were so persistent with our people as salespersons. If you didn't sell them, you had to 'eat' them. You could make ten cents on each copy. The minimum was 100 papers—for those brothers who had maybe two jobs and not enough time, but the 'norm' was 300." Agieb Bilal, e-mail message to Kate Holbrook, February 22, 2014.

Conclusion

In their approaches to food production, Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims once again behaved in both assimilationist and separatist ways. They pursued the very American value of self-sufficiency for decidedly separatist reasons, including their distrust of national systems and millennialist beliefs in imminent and widespread destruction. They used the tools of traditional America, including hard work and farm work, to protect themselves from the destiny they foresaw for America. As a result, both groups developed distinct programs to promote their spiritual and physical well-being. For the Latter-day Saints, the systems involved a welfare plan that included contributing fast offering money to a fund for the poor, farming on Church-owned property, and teaching members to store food for emergency. Nation Muslims supported community members' businesses and participated in Nation ventures like selling newspapers and whiting fish. Visiting teaching and LDS welfare programs replaced, or at least sought to supplement, federal food security efforts while Nation enterprise helped members to establish a self-supporting infrastructure that could see to all of their needs without relying on white industry or aid programs that prioritized white citizens. These efforts promoted temporal salvation, but they were also good for the spirit. Latter-day Saints found "the dole" to be deeply spiritually crippling, whereas work cheered the heart and even saved the soul.

To a large extent, millenarianism made the distinction between LDS, Nation, and federal efforts. Federal programs and public intellectuals believed they could find permanent solutions to hunger in the ways they approached the relationship between food

production and the American way of life. Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims were less sanguine and focused their efforts on both immediate relief and a longer-range plan to prepare for massive economic crisis. This difference between these two groups and other Americans can be seen in the approach both took to farming. The federal government thought large farms would become increasingly efficient and able to feed all citizens. The government could provide temporarily hungry Americans with "subsistence homesteads" until that happy time. But Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims foresaw the failure of national systems and knew they needed something separate, so that when the unrighteous were destroyed, the righteous survivors would have systems and storage to save them. This is one reason Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims focused more on larger farming systems that could feed their whole communities.

Chapter 3. Eating with Each Other

Tensions between assimilation and separation become particularly apparent with these two outsider groups at mealtime. In their table rituals, both the Nation of Islam and the Latter-day Saints began by assimilating to American mealtime norms, but gradually moved toward separation—not because they changed, but because Gentiles did. Both groups adopted (and excelled in) aspects of mainstream culture, then held fast to them after the broader culture began to shift. The following accounts of meals in the form of fiction, reminiscence, and official directive show how Nation Muslims and Latter-day Saints dedicated considerable effort to developing for themselves practices that proved them to be both civilized (conversant with norms) and exceptional (superior to those norms).

The table is an obvious place where one proves one's facility with the language of social etiquette or confronts one's alleged inferiority with a performance of some sort. Roland Barthes argued in the 1970s that all human endeavors, including sport, relaxation, celebration, and work, among others, can be represented through food. Barthes built on Marx's conception that cultural myths came to be seen as God-given or natural rather than constructed by humans and that this perspective of cultural norms as static and eternal (what Barthes calls the erasing of their historicity) allowed for the continuation of

an unjust status quo.[247] Both Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims attempted to defy that unjust status quo in the way they approached food preparation and mealtime. Carefully scripted approaches to mealtime could overturn stereotypes of African Americans as slovenly and appetite driven and Latter-day Saints as unsophisticated rural hicks.[248] Members used mealtime to define their own cultural narratives by having full-time homemakers prepare meals, by preparing and consuming those meals in an immaculately clean environment, and by consuming meals according to scripted standards that reinforced their values of health, community, and self-sufficiency.

Preparing the Meal: Women in the Kitchen

Leaders in both the Nation and the LDS Church signified their social status by emphasizing the domestic ideology that prevailed in white American culture during the decades after World War II.[249] Women who stayed home represented social refinement; working women were associated with financial distress. When American women began reentering the workforce with the advent of second-wave feminism in the 1970s, Nation and LDS voices began to insist more urgently that women in their traditions confine their work to their homes. Connecting women to the domestic sphere in the Nation served two integrated roles in the movement. It proved the Nation's refinement, and it served as evidence that Nation men could protect their women from the brutality of white society.

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[247] Roland Barthes, "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption," in *Food and Drink in History: Selections from the Annales, Économies, Sociétes, Civilisations, Volume 5,* ed. Robert Forster and Orest Ranum (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 166.

[248] For a historical review of this popular cultural depiction from the twentieth century to the present, see Cristine Hutchison-Jones, "Defining 'America': Reviling and Revering the Mormons, 1890–2008" (PhD diss., Boston University, 2011).

[249] For detailed analysis of the American emphasis on women as homemakers during the early Cold War Era, see Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

Elijah Muhammad insisted that women be at home to supervise family life and prepare meals, while he encouraged men to take seriously their responsibility as breadwinners. Such a position at times required great sacrifices, as neither Nation Muslims nor Latter-day Saints were particularly affluent. Even as a child, Sonsyrea Tate identified the peril here in terms of her family's financial well-being and the threat that allegiance to broader American norms posed to the Nation's claim of a distinctive identity as God's chosen people. Tate's parents had very little money. Her father was an underemployed musician and he, her mother, and her grandmother (Grandwillie) all agreed with Elijah Muhammad that women should not work outside the home: "Working women were the reason our society was going to hell, they explained to me."[250] Though Tate's mother was a trained nurse, she and Grandwillie ran an informal daycare center in their home to bring in money while "staying home." When eight-year-old Tate complained in 1974 that her mother should work as a nurse to bring in more money, "Ma kept telling me that rich white women didn't work, that they stayed home and took care of their kids like she was doing. I thought it was kind of odd that she was trying to be like rich white people, since we believed they were the devil. But I didn't quite know how to ask her about that."[251] A young girl's frustrated confusion with her mother struck at one of the core tensions that the Nation confronted as members constructed home and meals. They needed to be better than mainstream culture, but their definition of better could not divorce itself from the expectations of the broader culture. Such conflicts have long been endemic to outsider religion in America.

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[250] Tate, *Little X*, 85.
[251] Ibid., 88.

Tate's parents shared a popular understanding about why women in the Nation should stay home—that doing so signaled a more refined social status. But Elijah Muhammad also wanted to protect black women from sexual exploitation by white men. He frequently framed the issue, via agricultural metaphors, as an effort to preserve black racial purity: "The woman is the man's field to produce his Nation. If he does not keep the enemy out of his field, he won't produce a good Nation."[252] Elijah Muhammad often spoke of Nation Muslims' need to grow their own food, to lock white people out of food production. This metaphor is in character for him; he quite literally wanted human black seed grown in human black soil. "Protect your woman" was the final goal of his "Twelve Point Program,"[253] a statement of the movement's goals, and he saw a people's ability to protect its women as directly linked to its status:

> Until you protect your woman, you will never be fit and recognized people on the earth [sic]. The white people here among you will never recognize you until you protect you woman. You and I may go to Harvard, we may go to York of England, or go to Al Ahar in Cairo and get degrees from all these great seats of learning. But we will never be recognized until we recognize our women.[254]

"Recognizing" women did not mean honoring their achievements in Elijah Muhammad's idiom. For example, he once spoke of visiting two of his sons who were studying in the Middle East. During his travels, he also visited Turkey, Ethiopia, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan. He reported dining with some of the most influential people in these lands, and drew attention to the fact that in many of their homes he never even saw a woman. Boys waited on them, not women. Recognizing women meant, ironically, keeping them

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[252] Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman in America*, 58.
[253] Khalifah, *The Muslim Recipe Book*, 11.
[254] Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman in America*, 58–59.

out of sight for their own protection. For Elijah Muhammad, this practice symbolized the social status bestowed by an international Muslim community.

Muhammad's language is unsettling from a Western twenty-first century perspective. But "protecting" women reflected at least in part the Nation's program to eliminate the conditions of slave existence. For centuries, female slaves in the United States had suffered sexual exploitation while their loved ones stood powerless to interfere. "Protect your woman" was an attempt to end a legacy in which white men raped black women, a crime that certainly had not ceased with the Emancipation Proclamation. A 1963 report of the rape of an eighteen-year-old girl, who died from injuries sustained during the rape, asserts, "Of all the victims of criminal rape, the poverty-stricken black woman in America's Southland remains the most molested and the most unprotected. As it was in slavery, and as it has been ever since, the wanton rape of Negro women by white men continues without pause in remote, rural areas."[255] Though keeping women out of the workforce was not a cure, Elijah Muhammad's proposed response addressed an urgent need. Historian Michael Gomez defined well the way Elijah Muhammad's approach to women's security was both a help and a hindrance. In describing the leader's thinking, he wrote:

> Women had to be protected—but for them to be protected, they had to be "respected," or valued for their roles and unrealized potential. To the extent that this constrained domestic violence and abuse of all descriptions, such a call was of great benefit, although falsely premised (in not affording women equal status).[256]

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[255] "Georgia's Harvest of Rape and Poverty," *Muhammad Speaks*, August 16, 1963, 4.
[256] Gomez, *Black Crescent*, 324.

Though free of the horrific experience of enslavement, Latter-day Saints also emulated and later protested American Protestant society in their ideas about women and the domestic sphere. The LDS assignment of meal preparation to women was defined in terms of parenting. Women were the primary caregivers, and kitchen work was an essential part of raising children.

Women in Mormonism had not always been encouraged to work exclusively at home. In the nineteenth century, Latter-day Saints accepted for pragmatic reasons the need for women to work. During the practice of polygamy, women were often explicitly encouraged to earn money. An 1856 message from the First Presidency instructed:

> Mothers in Israel, you are also called upon to bring up your daughters to pursue some useful avocation for a sustenance, that when they shall becomes [sic] the wives of the Elders of Israel, who are frequently called upon missions, or to devote their time and attention to the things of the kingdom, they may be able to sustain themselves and their offspring.[257]

Though some prominent men like Brigham Young had the resources to support numerous families, most did not. In addition, married men were often called to serve missions, requiring that they visit places where they knew no one. They arrived "without purse or scrip," meaning they relied on charity and providence for food and shelter. Missionaries earned no money to send home. For many households both missionary service and polygamy were prescriptions for poverty.[258]

As the practice of polygamy faded around the turn of the century, Latter-day Saints came to embrace the Victorian family ideal, which persisted as "the primary image

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[257] Sack, *Whitebread Protestants*, 90.

[258] Annie Clark Tanner's autobiography depicts the unfolding of this process for one family. Annie Clark Tanner, *A Mormon Mother; an Autobiography* (Salt Lake City: Tanner Trust Fund, University of Utah Library, 1973).

of motherhood during the next thirty or forty years."[259] Still, overt, official discouragement of women working outside the home came only when many American middle-class women were pursuing new career options during the late 1970s and early 1980s. This was likely in large part an oppositional response to the Equal Rights Amendment, which was passed by the Congress in 1972 but ran out of time for ratification by the states in 1982.[260]

The *Relief Society Magazine* provided a forum for midcentury women to grapple through poetry and fiction with the difficulties of housework. For example, in a poem called "Dishes," LDS poet Alice Morrey Bailey highlighted a connection between housework and parenting when she used dirty dishes to frame her autobiographical, poetic account of raising children. She, too, emphasized the importance of clean table settings. First, she taught children to wash dishes without breaking them, then not to quarrel about whose turn it was to wash. The fifth stanza in this poem introduced gendered divisions of labor where, as they looked forward to their father coming home for dinner, the girls put forks around "every shining plate," while the boys just washed their own hands. When important company was invited, such as a boyfriend, girls showed him that he was significant in their eyes as they polished the good silver for a table set with glass and lace: "It's just as well for Anna's beau to realize his place." Though she described faithfully the centrality of clean dishes as signifiers in family life, this sardonic poet did not ignore the laborious process by which they were obtained. "Now I've

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[259] Linda P. Wilcox, "Mormon Motherhood: Official Images," in *Sisters in Spirit*, ed. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Andersen (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 211.
[260] Martha Sonntag Bradley, *Pedestals and Podiums: Utah Women, Religious Authority, and Equal Rights* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2005), 467–78.

learned to curb my tongue, my violent wants and wishes. / Can it be I'm all alone with memories—and dishes?"[261] The now senior speaker reflected that even when the children were grown, there was no escaping dirty dishes, a humorous and painful observation that revealed some dissatisfaction with "women's work."

A 1959 fictional account of an ideal LDS meal emphasized the notion that good women were pragmatic, worked hard, and fed and cared for children—even when the children were not their own. "The Silver Leash"[262] relates the adventures of LaRue Harding, a young LDS woman who "temporarily" leaves her secretarial position in San Francisco for Fivelakes, Arizona, to assist the family of her recently deceased sister. LaRue's grieving brother-in-law Herbert is confined to a wheelchair because he lacks courage to undergo the experimental surgery that would restore him to health. The children, neglected by their father as they mourn for their mother, strike out in resentment against one another and the story's heroine. Even Herbert's physician, the handsome Dr. Alan Rutherford, courts disaster in the form of an impending bad marriage. We know "Dr. Alan" is headed toward unhappiness because his fiancée Gladys wears fancy dresses, ignores children, and never helps with kitchen work. Gladys wants to take the money Dr. Alan hopes to use to construct a clinic for the poor and spend it instead on an expensive house. LaRue's efforts to ease any of these conditions seem to bear little fruit, until one day she conceives the idea of a picnic. The picnic changes everything.

Modest and nourishing, LaRue's meal includes fried chicken (prepared by Dr. Alan), potato salad, rolls, pie, and clean water eaten and drunk under the open country

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[261] Alice Morrey Bailey, "Dishes," *Relief Society Magazine*, December 1945.
[262] Beatrice R. Parsons, "The Silver Leash," *The Relief Society Magazine*, January–August 1959.

sky. Such a picnic demonstrated many aspects of an ideal LDS meal; both the food and the atmosphere were wholesome, unfussy, inexpensive, appealing, and centered on relationships. Following the picnic, LaRue's nieces and nephews come to love her and relate more peacefully with one another, Herbert agrees to have surgery (which is a success), and Dr. Alan marries LaRue, a generous spiritual partner worthy of his noble ambitions. Unlike her narrative foil, Gladys, LaRue represents the LDS female ideal because she focuses on the well-being of others, including family members and the faceless poor, over her own financial well-being, physical appearance, or social ambitions. LaRue successfully takes on a domestic role before she even has children of her own; even her name—"way" or "street" in French—suggests a woman of utility.

The story presented messages about ideal manhood as well. Good Dr. Alan had the clarity to forsake Gladys for LaRue, a better worker and more responsible caregiver. Dr. Alan also fried the chicken. In this detail, the story was a tad unusual but not unique. Women were seen as primarily responsible for meal preparation, but not exclusively so. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* first appeared in 1963, emphasizing the horror of a life centered on housework. Although she failed to convince the bulk of Latter-day Saints that women belonged in the workforce, perhaps the conversations Friedan inspired contributed to lesson content encouraging sensitivity among men toward their hardworking wives. A 1965 priesthood lesson[263] recommended that men should help with kitchen work on occasion. The lesson posed two scenarios. In the first vignette, a man arrived home from work to discover that his wife was only beginning to prepare dinner.

[263] The *Priesthood Manual of Instruction* was the text all male members of the Church studied each Sunday during Church meetings.

When she tried to explain, he interrupted and demanded his meal: "I don't want any excuses! I'll watch TV for fifteen minutes, and then I want my supper."[264] When the husband in the second scenario returned home from work, he noticed that his wife looked harried and asked her what was wrong. She explained that the little girl next door fell, and that she and the girl's family had just returned from the hospital. Everyone was worried she might have broken her back. The husband sympathized with his wife, suggesting a plan in which he helped to set the table and prepare the meal. Afterward they could go to the hospital together to visit little Jane. These scenarios suggest, first, that enough men were making unreasonable demands and avoiding kitchen work that they needed a lesson to correct their ways; and second, that an ideal Latter-day Saint woman would be primarily responsible for food preparation, but husbands should assist at least during times of crisis.

The following year, a lesson titled, "Is Your Wife a Partner?" chastised men for not honoring the work women did at home as having equal importance to their own ecclesiastical and professional obligations. This lesson showed a man coming home from an early meeting to collect his family for worship services. When he saw they were not ready, he exploded. Following this story, the manual posed the question, "Why do some priesthood bearers think that their role is more important than that of their wife [sic]?" Then, acknowledging that many men would persist in this belief, the lesson attempted to reform them anyway: "Even though the attitude that he is more important than his wife is wrong, if Charles has felt this way, what could he do to emphasize the importance of his

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[264] "Lesson 13: The Relationship of the Priesthood Holder to His Wife," in *Melchizedek Priesthood Lessons 1965* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1965), 82.

wife's position in the family?"[265] Women were to perform a work that society saw as menial, but official Church voices tried to assert that it had equal value to men's work.

Publication of the *Relief Society Magazine* ceased in 1970, and thereafter conversations about women and housework came in the form of individually published manuals. The Relief Society had produced their *Relief Society Magazine,* so its pages had been full of talks, fiction, poetry, and informational articles chosen by women for a female audience. The *Ensign* magazine, begun in 1971, replaced both the *Relief Society Magazine* and *The Improvement Era,* which had been produced for all members, both male and female. The consolidation meant that publication of any periodicals would now proceed more closely under priesthood supervision. These manuals generally did not spend ink on women grappling with frustrating aspects of housework and homemaking. They reinforced the equation of mothering with housework without literary space for ambivalence. The introduction to a 1979 homemaking manual, for example, framed homemaking as a daily chance to make a difference for the members of one's family, thereby emphasizing that housework mattered. How it mattered included the benefit of fortified relationships: "The Latter Day Saint woman knows well the importance of skill, efficiency and creativity as, through the work of her home, she forges bonds—eternal bonds—with those she loves." According to LDS doctrine, eternal bonds were the very definition of heaven. Heaven meant an eternal life spent with God, Jesus, and loved ones. These bonds represented the greatest possible rewards of human existence, and the homemaking manual promised the skilled, efficient, and creative execution of housework

[265] *The Priesthood and You: A Course of Study for the Mechizedek Priesthood of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,1966), 183.

would move women toward those rewards. In its single-minded focus on the positive aspects of housework, the manual only implicitly acknowledged its dreary side. Where the manual was "dedicated to the conviction that . . . homemaking efforts can be a blessing in her life and the lives of others,"[266] readers saw that this connection between notions of "homemaking" and "blessing" were not always obvious.[267] Labeling homemaking a potential blessing reflected a typical LDS insistence that righteous living promoted happiness in this life as well as the next.

Both groups' resolve about women preparing meals shows a desire to prove their refinement. For some Nation Muslims, this desire involved imitating "rich white" people, while for Elijah Muhammad it was also about protecting women from rape by keeping them away from white men. The Latter-day Saints linked housework with the importance of raising children and defined meal-preparation as an essential aspect of mothering. Men were told to think of this work as equal in importance to their own activities, and were to assist with the work when needed.

Homemaking Education

Both Mormonism and the Nation of Islam envisioned and perpetuated refined table standards through formal education, an impulse that mirrored Pierre Bourdieu's hope that education was one (and perhaps the only) avenue that provided individuals the chance to move among otherwise entrenched social class assignments.[268] Bourdieu taught that learning what members of the upper class knew—what to read, how to speak, what

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[266] *Homemaking Manual* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979), i.
[267] *Homemaking Manual*.
[268] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984).

to eat—permitted people to pass into more rarefied circles. When poor Nation or LDS women attended courses on how to cook and clean, they were socialized by official aspirations to build a people who were knowledgeable, clean, and refined. Homemaking education for women thus underscored the priorities the group wished to project to outsiders even as it sustained members' own sense of refinement and reinforced their station as God's chosen people.

Muslim Girls Training and General Civilization Class (MGT) taught women theologically informed home management skills and provided a chance for social engagement. Nation teachings about meals focused on hygiene, etiquette, and health.[269] As a former Sister Captain, Saafie Karim was in charge of conducting this instruction for her local temple. She remembered teaching women how to be clean "inwardly and outwardly" and how to get along with each other. They also conducted drilling exercises in various temples to improve posture and fitness.

Many of Karim's memories involve teachings about food. She said they taught her how to cook, clean, and prepare food the right way, "not always putting meat in everything." She also learned to cook meat properly, and bake desserts like carrot cake, bean pie, and squash pie. Karim not only valued the instruction, but also the informal chats that crept in during the meetings when women would "sit around talking to one another about [their] experience."[270]

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[269] Curtis, *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam, 1960–1975*, 146–52; Muhammad and Khalifah, *The Muslim Recipe Book*.
[270] Saafie Karim, telephone interview by Kate Holbrook, February 13, 2011.

MGT classes did not include eating meals together; Nation Muslims were expected to eat only once per day at a meal they took in the evening with their families. But they would sometimes buy meals after class to take home. Such meals were prepared by women at the temple and sold to pay for temple expenses. Too young to cook or march, Tate remembers proudly watching her older sisters perform drills while her Grandwillie prepared meals to sell in the kitchen. To a young Sonsyrea Tate,

> M.G.T. class was sort of like get-togethers, our own kind of special sister socials, even though it was a class and we had lessons to learn . . .To me M.G.T. class was like a tea party with real people and real talking instead of stuffed animals and toy dishes. But for some of the other women it was more like a meeting, an opportunity for them to talk about things that bothered them.[271]

In similar fashion, LDS women held monthly "homemaking meetings" where they rehearsed skills such as "home management and beautification," food preparation, and sewing. By the 1960s, these areas of expertise were always understood in religious terms—as central to the spiritual lives of women themselves and the members of their household. The overt message of these lessons was that meals should be informed by "provident living" rather than social ambition. During these meetings LDS women learned the importance of simple, affordable, nutritious meals that they believed contributed as well to more abstract forms of nourishment (spiritual, emotional). Lesson topics underscored these ideals. Lessons organized under the title Developing Efficient Cooking Techniques taught rules for proper cooking (including details such as baking with eggs at room temperature and adjustments for high altitudes), and creating "tempting" and well-rounded meals. These meals were elaborate for something labeled

[271] Tate, *Little X*, 92.

efficient; they were certainly more than a full-time working woman could produce. A sample meal from 1979 included:

> Braised pork chops with gravy
> Mashed potatoes
> Buttered fresh green beans
> Waldorf salad
> Muffins and butter
> Baked custard[272]

Young LDS men had weekly meetings, too, which focused on spiritual instruction, effective parenting, and service to the poor. Young men aged twelve to eighteen were often taken on field trips, including camping trips that could last several days.[273] Some field trips were to museums or other cultural venues, but the considerable overlap with Scouting meant a majority of gatherings focused on outdoor recreation and sports, including lessons on cooking in the woods. Likewise, many men (both adolescents and adults) in the Nation of Islam belonged to the Fruit of Islam (FOI), which met weekly for training in "military protocol, boxing, judo, and wrestling," all of which aided in their protection of women.[274] The only curricular overlap with women's classes was the emphasis on personal physical and mental cleanliness. Whereas women learned to clean their homes, men were taught the importance of cleaning the Temple building. FOI classes included cultural field trips to museums and classes in art and woodcraft. They learned nothing about food preparation, but pursued the goal of refinement through different means.

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[272] *Homemaking Manual*, 23.
[273] John Christensen, telephone interview by Kate Holbrook, February 17, 2011; *Priesthood Manual of Instruction* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979).
[274] Curtis, *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam, 1960–1975*, 136–37.

The Language of Cleanliness

Home economics ideals that had been successfully disseminated throughout America since the turn of the century flourished in the Nation and among Latter-day Saints, including attention to proper nutrition, well-balanced meals, cleanliness, and manners.[275] Historian Suellen Hoy reports that by the end of the 1950s, "Americans were known worldwide for their cleanliness."[276] In fact, a decade later one of the most effective ways that hippies rebelled against bourgeois culture was to reject cleanliness. "One of the best and most satisfying ways for young adults of the 1960s to thumb their noses at middle-class American values was to swear off soap and water. Personal cleanliness had become so embedded in national life that the hippies paid an unwitting, ironic tribute to its power when they ostentatiously junked it in favor of scraggly beards, stringy hair, and smelly bodies."[277] Even when some children of the American middle-class rejected the trappings of cleanliness, Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims continued to embrace it. Members discussed cleanliness in formal classes and emphasized it generally among themselves. A cleanliness ideal permeated LDS culture. For example, a fictional account of a widower depicts him talking out loud to his deceased wife more than three decades after her passing. "There, Mary Emma, is this clean enough to suit you?" the story begins. As he speaks, Cyril Roberts looks around his kitchen at the "clean, old-fashioned oak cupboard, with its mirror at the back of the mid-

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[275] Laura Shapiro, *Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Modern Library, 2001); James C. Whorton, *Inner Hygiene: Constipation and the Pursuit of Health in Modern Society* (Oxford: New York, 2000).
[276] Suellen M. Hoy, *Chasing Dirt: The American Pursuit of Cleanliness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 173.
[277] Ibid., 176.

section buffet, at the clean-swept linoleum, and at the geraniums blooming on the clean window sills." We learn that Cyril considers these "conversations" with Mary Emma as salutary because they keep him from feeling too lonely and "kept him doing his best and keeping the home neat and clean."[278] Ultimately, this story is about the loneliness of old age and the comfort attentive adult children can provide. But below the surface is a companion narrative about the importance of keeping a clean house—even when the man has to clean it himself, inspired to do so by the memory of his wife.

In her chapter on "Table-setting and Serving for Home and Company Meals," Leah Widtsoe repeatedly promoted cleanliness as compensating for any economic shortcomings a family might have: "If the home is clean and tidy, the meal well-cooked and served, with a cheerful host and hostess, guests will enjoy themselves and want to come again."[279] To avoid undue burden on a mother of young children, a lightly soiled cloth could be used for a family meal, with napkins strategically placed to disguise spots. But when the family ate with others, immaculate linen was the rule: "Theoretically the cloth should be spotless, and for company it must be so."

Some public buildings were also supposed to be kept scrupulously spick and span. LDS temples, considered an earthly residence for God, were impeccably clean and closed for two weeks annually for additional intensive cleaning. Volunteers polished chandeliers and door handles; they ran cloths over the not-vet-visible accumulations of dust on wainscoting and other moldings.

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[278] Mabel Law Atkinson, "Dear Father," *Relief Society Magazine*, June 1959, 354.
[279] Widtsoe, *How to Be Well: A Health Handbook and Cook-Book Based on the Newer Knowledge of Nutrition*, 474, 470.

This perfection was not a ploy to impress outsiders. Except for a few weeks following the construction of a new temple, outsiders did not even have access to the inside of the building. Avid cleaning attention was paid to other public buildings as well. Every public room and private office at Brigham Young University was vacuumed nightly by students earning money for tuition. The Hotel Utah, which opened in 1911, provided a prime instance of a public building kept extraordinarily clean. The hotel was constructed to house and impress important guests, and it did accommodate every U.S. President from William Howard Taft to Ronald Reagan before it was converted to other purposes in 1987. Magnificent chandeliers graced dining rooms and reception areas. It took one employee six months to complete the task of individually polishing the crystals of each chandelier. At one point, hotel managers experimented with raising a tub filled with cleaning solvent to bathe the crystals en masse, but they gave the idea up. Though the method provided much in the way of efficiency, the crystals just did not sparkle as they had when individually polished. In addition, money used to pay for meals was daily "laundered" by the hotel; a man in the basement poured each day's collection of coins into a large trough, added king-size BBs, and a chemical solution, then mixed them together until the coins shone. The U.S. mint had written to the hotel: "You have our encouragement to give the coins a shower." Paper money was put in a box and exchanged at a bank for new bills.[280]

[280] Leonard J. Arrington and Heidi S. Swinton, *The Hotel: Salt Lake's Classy Lady: The Hotel Utah, 1911–1986* (Salt Lake City: Publisher's Press on Behalf of The Westin Hotel Utah, 1986), 30.

While not going so far as to purify their money, Nation Muslims also placed an extreme emphasis on cleanliness at home, in public buildings, and in personal hygiene. Of Elijah Muhammad's "24 Principles of Islam," three explicitly address cleanliness:

> 10. A Muslim is clean in mind, body and action.
>
> 12. A Muslim keeps his person clean, as well as his living quarters.
>
> 21. Keep self-clean internally and externally at all times.[281]

Muhammad Speaks articles also emphasized this value, linking cleanliness directly with social refinement. As with the Latter-day Saints, cleanliness was required of both genders. Fatima X wrote,

> Muslim homes are spotlessly clean. . . . [women's] manners are perfect. They are cultured and quiet; they personify all that the word lady implies. / These women are real ladies, and due the respect of civilized people all over the world. . . . The men are gentlemen. . . . He is immaculately clean in his person and attire at all times. His conversations are always clean and on high things. . . . He is a truly civilized man. The Muslim man and woman are the only truly civilized people in America.[282]

Another columnist argued that not only were Nation Muslims clean, they were cleaner than people in other traditions:

> Though we may be Christians, Jews or Muslims, we have in common a love of God and religion. It is only when we investigate the internal functions of these religions that we discover that one or the other leads us to God and not merely to an idea or conception of God. If, then, we agree that cleanliness is next to Godliness, has the Christian attained this purity? Has the Jew and the Muslim? The first place to look perhaps is in the home.[283]

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[281] Khalifah, *The Muslim Recipe Book*, 10.
[282] Fatima X, "Denver Sister Outlines Life of Muslims," *Muhammad Speaks*, January 13, 1967, 25.
[283] "Cleanliness Is Next to Godliness," *Muhammad Speaks*, July 1962.

The writer then continued to describe how Muslims were better at maintaining both physical and spiritual cleanliness than Christians or Jews. She argued that their success was due in part to not defiling their bodies with alcohol, which leads to slovenly behavior. She also asserted that Muslims were more reliable about performing ablutions before prayer. By investigating the fruits of major religions in terms of both internal and physical cleanliness, this article concluded that Islam provided the superior path.

Muslim homes were also scrupulously clean: "Many illustrations in the *Muhammad Speaks*, the Nation of Islam's publication, placed emphasis on the theme of middle-class respectability. There were usually pictures showing a couple with children in a well-furnished living or dining room. There were, on a number of occasions, advertisements . . . Encouraging the purchase of suburban houses, the importance of homeownership and suburban living."[284]

Table Etiquette

A 1963 Emily Post book on Mealtime etiquette asserts that manners matter because they impact the way people think of others and treat others. "Today's world judges us by our manners, whether good or bad. . . . When good table manners have become second nature, children develop a finished ease that helps them to meet others with self-assurance."[285] Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims were aware of table etiquette's power to communicate and attended carefully to the messages they wished to convey while dining. The tension between the two groups' impulse to outdo insiders at

[284] Rashad, *Elijah Muhammad and the Ideological Foundation of the Nation of Islam*, 199.
[285] Rose V. White, "Meal Time Etiquette" (New York: Pocket Books, 1963), 1.

their own game and to prove themselves distinct is particularly evident in this realm. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines etiquette as something monolithic: "The conventional rules of personal behaviour observed in the intercourse of polite society; the ceremonial observances prescribed by such rules."[286] But both Nation and LDS practices show how etiquette can be made particular: the "rules of personal behavior observed in the intercourse of polite [Muslim] or polite [LDS] society." Nation Muslims understood well that their practices conveyed meanings to the outside world. During an "Honors Day Banquet" at Mosque No. 4, Elijah Muhammad taught, "We must be able to convey what is in us by signs. A sign is defined as that by which anything is known or represented; a symbol; a token; a gesture used instead of speech."[287] Signs held implications for insiders as well as outsiders. Where food was a tool employed to represent the terms of refinement for this marginalized group, Nation Muslims focused on highly organized, Gentile systems of service and clean, properly set tables. Banquets were carefully orchestrated, formal affairs complete with hostesses who showed you to your table. Saafie Karim (formerly Myrna X) fondly remembers fulfilling her responsibility as a member of the banquet committee, which charged her to act as hostess. She dressed up, smiled as she welcomed people, took their tickets, and showed them to their seats.[288] Minus the ticket exchange, such was the image one would expect to encounter in an upscale, mainstream American restaurant. Issues of *Muhammad Speaks* reinforced the

[286] *Oxford English Dictionary* Online, s.v. "etiquette," accessed March 8, 2011, http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.bu.edu/view/Entry/64853?redirectedFrom=etiquette#.
[287] Doris X, "Honors Day Banquet," *Muhammad Speaks*, December 3, 1971.
[288] Karim, interview.

refined image of diners at Nation restaurants. Photos recorded smiling, well-dressed diners holding their menus as they interacted with impressive waitstaff. [289]

One significant marker of their assimilationist leanings at mealtime was choosing to sit in chairs. In many of the cultures Nation Muslims looked to for inspiration, dining took place on the floor. In fact, when Sonsyrea Tate's family left the Nation in the 1970s for a more mainstream version of Islam, they began tak ing their meals on the floor. Tate resisted the change: "We hated the way Ma made us sit around a tablecloth on the floor like Arab Muslims instead of up at the table, and we hated when Ma took our spoons and forks and made us eat with our fingers like Orthodox Muslims used to do during the lifetime of the religions founder, Prophet Muhammad."[290] That Nation Muslims did not eat dinner on the floor shows their ultimate devotion to many American norms. Perhaps the floor was insufficiently refined in their minds. Food historian Margaret Visser noted that careful posture on a chair demonstrated self-control. Speaking of Western culture, she noted, "Rigidity—sitting bolt upright *on a chair* and very still—is traditionally, with us, a sign of decorum. Never is this more so than at the table, where the need to show signs which conventionally demonstrate goodwill and self-control is, as we have seen, absolutely vital."[291] Slaves would rarely have had the option to sit properly at a table, whereas doing so was a means for Nation Muslims to be decorous.

Highlighting the balance between emulating and rejecting America's white, middle-class culture, Nation tables were set fastidiously in the proper manner with

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[289] See, for example, "Welcome Graduates: Class of 1975," *Muhammad Speaks*, March 7, 1975.
[290] Tate, *Little X*, 109.
[291] Margaret Visser, *The Rituals of Dinner: The Origins, Evolution, Eccentricities, and Meaning of Table Manners* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991), 152.

immaculate linens. However, in accordance with MGT instructions, forks were placed on the right, knives on the left, which was exactly opposite to what one would find on most American tables.[292] This format appears to be about outperforming the dominant culture; members would set tables neatly, but do it their own way. The unusual placement of forks and knives (spoons could acceptably pair either with knife or fork) did not reflect the practice of the peoples to which Nation Muslims related in terms of identity. Africans (an admittedly broad generalization that describes many peoples) often used bread as a utensil, or when there was a utensil, it was served with the bowl of food, not placed on the table beforehand. The traditional Middle Eastern approach was to eat directly from the right hand, which acted as a scoop. Placing utensils on opposite sides of the plate was simply a declaration of difference, albeit one that acknowledged the standard of a table set with knives, spoons, and forks around a plate. Other Nation dining habits reflected white, middle-class ideals but were presented as specific to Islam. A cartoon in *Muhammad Speaks* showed the craven manners of pork-eaters, whose child cried for scraps from under the table while the mother lounged with a cigarette (ash falling where it listed) and the obese father ate with both hands, a napkin tucked under his chins. Food spilled over the sides of serving plates and the tablecloth was covered with dribbles.[293]

Occasional Friday night dinners out were a highlight of Sonsyrea Tate's childhood. Most often her family went to the Shabazz restaurant in Washington, D.C., which was run by one of her uncles. According to her recollections, the restaurant was located in a "dingy" part of town, on the same street where pimps, prostitutes, and "dope

[292] Karim, interview.
[293] Eugene Majied, "Eating the Wrong Food," *Muhammad Speaks*, July 16, 1965.

dealers" came out at night, but "the brothers in the Nation who had turned the building into a restaurant with a health food store up front and fish market on the side had done a great job of carving out a nice, spanking clean place for us to dine."[294] Tate remembers that people who did not belong to the Nation ate at the restaurant, too, appreciating what it had to offer independent of its religious affiliation. Their repeated visits made her proud:

> People who used to laugh at us were eating at *our* restaurant, sucking in the aroma of our special recipes for bean soup and Whiting fish, browsing through our newspapers they bought on their way in. I thought people were beginning to realize that the Muslim way was the right way and that life could be this good for all Black people if they only listened to the Messenger.[295]

The young Tate had internalized the Nation's ideals to the extent that she saw them as something everyone must share—and clearly nonmembers who ate at the restaurant did share many of those values. Dining at the restaurant represented the realization of a Nation ideal: nutritious, tasty food, hygienically presented, respectably served and consumed, prepared by the same black hands that would benefit from the profits.

Though meals consumed at home were less formal than public dinners, they continued to convey signs of refinement. Members of both groups often entertained at home, perhaps in part because restrictions against smoking, drinking, and gambling made a number of public meeting places inappropriate. Saafie Karim recalls that when someone invited guests over, the hosts generally planned to provide the entire meal—

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[294] Tate, *Little X*, 67.
[295] Ibid., 68–69.

unlike less-formal potluck traditions. Nation Muslim Viola loved to feed people and would often make lots of food and start inviting people over at the end of Temple meetings. Despite the informal invitation, however, guests still sat around a table when they ate in her home. These were not simple meals. Karim said that when you only eat one meal a day, people expect a minimum of soup, salad, and a main course with sides, rolls, and dessert.

Latter-day Saints were often less deliberate than Nation Muslims about the detailed symbolism of their meals, but they remained acutely aware that a meal's form and content sent messages. Toward the latter half of the nineteenth century, the entire Church had undergone a process labeled "Retrenchment," which meant simplifying and making sure that the way members conducted their lives and Church meetings reflected core LDS values. Determining the ideal of the theologically and socially appropriate meal was complicated. Church president Brigham Young worried that meals had become too elaborate and out of harmony with LDS priorities. At a Sunday sermon in the Salt Lake Tabernacle, he complained that the foods served him during his travels to members of the Church were too rich and elaborate and that he suffered for it. In place of pies, tarts, and sweet meats, he requested johnny cake[296]: "Let me have something that will sustain nature and leave my stomach and whole system clear to receive the spirit of the Lord and be free from headache and pains of every kind." Young was concerned about the time

[296] Johnny cake was a flatbread made from cornmeal mush sweetened with molasses. See Amelia Simmons, *American Cookery, or, The Art of Dressing Viands, Fish, Poultry, and Vegetables: And the Best Modes of Making Puff-Pastes, Pies, Tarts, Puddings, Custards, and Preserves, and All Kinds of Cakes, from the Imperial Plumb to Plain Cake, Adapted to This Country, and All Grades of Life*, 2nd ed. (Albany, N.Y.: Charles R. & George Webster, 1796); Kristie Lynn and Robert W. Pelton, *The Early American Cookbook: Authentic Favorites for the Modern Kitchen* (Deerfield Beach, Fla.: Liberty Publishing, 1983).

spent on elaborate meals as well as the physical consequences to those who consumed them. "I wished to get up a society whose members would agree to have a light, nice breakfast in the morning, for themselves and children, without cooking something less than forty different kinds of food, making slaves of themselves and requiring three or four hired girls to wash dishes."[297]

Three months after Young's speech, the current Relief Society president, past presidents, and leaders and representatives from each of Salt Lake's congregations met to discuss "table retrenchment." The report of the 1870 "Minutes of Ladies' Cooperative Retrenchment Meeting" showed how women concerned about the "evils growing out of the excess and extravagance which our present customs require in the great varieties of dishes demanded in table entertainments" came to a mutual resolution to unite their efforts. These women saw their present mode of table service as counter to the ideal that "health is the mainspring of happiness, and economy the way-mark to prosperity." They wished to devote time saved through table retrenchment to the "noble purposes" of educating themselves and their children according to principles of physical and intellectual improvement. After recording their desires to economize time and money, the women articulated their final concern, about sisters who lacked resources for fashionable table serving. They were "Resolved,"

> That inasmuch as many of our good and worthy citizens are deterred from inviting company by the consideration that they cannot compete with their more affluent neighbors, and are thereby deprived of many rich and profitable interviews, we say that henceforth any table neatly spread, with

[297] John Grimshaw, "Remarks by President Brigham Young Delivered in the Tabernacle on Sunday Afternoon, Nov. 14, 1869," *Deseret News Weekly*, November 24, 1869, 495–96.

> no matter how plain but wholesome, food, *shall be considered fashionable*.

These women believed they could not only determine spiritually advisable dining habits, but simultaneously decree them fashionable! They sought not only spiritual prosperity, but social success as well. In Utah, Latter-day Saints and community leaders were often one and the same, so the women may have had sufficient social capital to realize their goal. The fact that the "newly fashionable" retrenchment meal with which they closed this meeting managed to include good bread and butter, stewed dried apples, cake, and blancmange with cream and preserves leaves one to wonder how complicated past meals had been, for this retrenchment meal was not exactly lentil pottage. The women found it up to par, as they reported "unclogged stomachs and unclouded minds . . . 'a feast of reason and a flow of soul.'"[298]

Seventy years later, Leah Widtsoe preached the same table values of simplicity and nourishment, and could not resist an emphasis on neat, clean table settings.

> The feast should never be so elaborate as to be a burden—either on those who prepare it or on those who eat it. Simplicity in entertaining friends is most desirable. It is a great mistake to feel that in order to give a party, one must put on a big show or have a great feast to "show off" one's possessions or prestige. . . . Don't hesitate to entertain because your home may not be as elegant as Mrs. So and So's who has entertained you; nor because you have only plain linen, plated silver and Kress glassware.[299]

Despite these words, neither Widtsoe nor her cultural milieu could resist a temptation to make meals fancy. After emphasizing simplicity, she added, "Every one

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[298] Mary I. Horne and Sarah M. Kimball, "Minutes of Ladies' Cooperative Retrenchment Meeting," *Deseret Evening News*, February 16, 1870.
[299] Widtsoe, *How to Be Well: A Health Handbook and Cook-Book Based on the Newer Knowledge of Nutrition*, 469–70

may learn to add the little touches in the home or to the meal that change the common place into the interesting. A minute and all but unobserved detail may add a charm to an evening that makes it outstanding. . . . Every woman is wise who gives some time and thought to these precious details."[300] Widtsoe even recommended centerpieces for private weekday family meals. "Table-setting is an art that every girl should learn and every woman is expected to know," she directed. "The decoration of the table is important either for the family or for guests. It should look attractive always, with clean linen, silverware, and dishes. The centerpiece need not be elaborate, but it must make the table look attractive."[301] Such statements simultaneously represent loyalty to official policies of economy and simplicity and a yearning to put on a fancier version of refinement, one perhaps more in line with the pictures from women's magazines.

The Sunday meals of one LDS California hostess further highlight this dilemma. As the woman's daughter described these meals decades later, she evidently had internalized LDS meal values because she admiringly described her mother's meals in terms of those values. Her mother served "simple and delicious food—not too contrived, not too expensive, not too many dishes." But like the retrenchment luncheon, these meals appeared to be more elaborate in actual content than loyal onlookers would admit. These Sunday dinners took place during the late forties and fifties. Guests included male suitors, though they also often entertained visiting Church officials: "every Church president from Heber J. Grant on, as well as many other leaders, turned up at our table." The meals

[300] Widtsoe, *How to Be Well: A Health Handbook and Cook-Book Based on the Newer Knowledge of Nutrition*, 470.
[301] Ibid., 474–75.

filled similar categories to those Tate remembered from Nation banquets and dinners at Nation restaurants: chicken, carrots, stringbeans, rolls, and dessert.[302] In other words, a meat, two vegetables, bread, and dessert. The California LDS family's meals looked like that, plus an additional starch. The "meat" might be a ham, a pot roast, stew, meat loaf, or split pea soup. "One of those succulent main dishes, accompanied by potatoes, vegetables, a green salad, and her legendary baking-powder biscuits, would make up the main course."

But the desserts at this table tended towards the extravagant. The mother made delicious layer cakes from scratch, often decorating them in enchanting ways. "Beneath her skillful hands, a cake's white icing would be covered with green-tinted coconut with nests of eggs hidden in the grass and ducks swimming on mirror-ponds. She turned out rich cookies almost as fast as we could eat them and would frequently whip up a pan of brownies or a platter of fudge or fondant as an extra." [303]

This cook's knowledge that meals should be simple, nourishing, and inexpensive was firmly in place. Yet, like the women Brigham Young begged for simple fare, she could not resist a little extra self-expression when the Church president came to town.

Finally, homemaking manuals and letters from Relief Society headquarters repeatedly emphasized that meals served at women's meetings should model for women a simple, nourishing, affordable ideal that they could reproduce at home. An April/May 1976 letter from headquarters, distributed to individual Relief Society presidents throughout the Church, instructed:

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[302] Tate, *Little X*, 65.
[303] Kimball, *Saints Well Seasoned*, 86–87.

> Homemaking counselors and luncheon chairmen should make each luncheon a learning opportunity in applying the principles of provident living. They should teach how to create attractive, nutritious, low-cost meals that the sisters can use in their homes. Good planning and simplicity are the keys to such a learning experience; potluck, sack-lunch, or elaborate party styles do not accomplish this purpose.[304]

Though a sack lunch would seem to satisfy the requirement of simplicity, it was apparently *too* simple. Perhaps the distribution of individual sacks undermined a sense of group participation, or maybe the concern was about women being asked to bring their own sack lunches. Potluck was also deemed unacceptable. This prohibition may have reflected a concern that women not be divided by their individual contributions—or inability to contribute. Otherwise, the regulation may reveal a lack of confidence that women not on the committee would bring appropriately "providential" dishes to share. There may have been more trust in the process of women learning from teachers and committee members than there was in a democratic exchange. Still another possibility is that Relief Society leaders wished women to have a luncheon provided for them as a respite from their regular schedule of housework.

On the other hand, "elaborate party styles" were too fancy, presumably because they were too expensive and time consuming to be models of everyday meals. As discussed in chapter 2, the Church tended to exert an influence that minimized class differences; and fancy homemaking luncheons would have introduced a basis for exclusionary or discriminatory judgments to be made as foods with upper-class associations were introduced. In addition, "provident living" with its emphasis on frugality and cooking with items from the pantry (Latter-day Saints were to keep a one-

[304] Relief Society, "Notes to the Field," vol. 6, no. 2, April–May 1976..

or two-year supply of food on hand, as described in chapter 2) also militated against elaborate meals.

The need for a century of repeated advice to keep meals simple highlights an LDS tendency to do just the opposite. Records of Latter-day Saint meals show a penchant for elaborate centerpieces. The *Relief Society Magazine* is full of photos where women gathered around a table to memorialize a reception or banquet. Most often, the food in these photos is either missing or overshadowed by an elaborate floral centerpiece. The respectability of these portraits seemed driven by the reason for gathering, the centerpieces, and the appearance of attendees more than it did by any food served. Throughout Church history, Latter-day Saints found it difficult to suppress a desire for decorative table settings.

Group Wealth and Financing Group Meals

The financing of communal meals provided both groups an opportunity to prove fiscal refinement, although each pursued this course in its own unique way. The LDS approach supported a conviction that the instruction, fellowship, and nourishment received at these meals should be available to all comers, free of charge. Intentionally or not, the policy also partook of an upper-class tradition that discouraged overt attention to money. The episode of Christ casting money changers from the temple was widely remembered in lesson manuals and talks. Any general authority or mission president[305] without sufficient economic resources to support himself and his family received a living stipend from the Church, and Church headquarters employed many administrative

[305] These positions require full-time Church work and preclude the possibility of working for income.

personnel. Despite these realities, members and missionaries loved to explain that the Church had no professional clergy (i.e., that their religious leaders were not paid for their work). Personal wealth was often viewed as suspect over the pulpit. For example, Church president Spencer Kimball preached:

> Many people spend most of their time working in the service of a self-image that includes sufficient money, stocks, bonds, investment portfolios, property, credit cards, furnishings, automobiles, and the like to *guarantee* carnal security throughout, it is hoped, a long and happy life. Forgotten is the fact that our assignment is to use these many resources in our families and quorums to build up the kingdom of God—to further the missionary effort and the genealogical and temple work; to raise our children up as fruitful servants unto the Lord; to bless others in every way, that they may also be fruitful.[306]

In Kimball's view, once individuals had enough money to cover basic living expenses, excess funds should be allocated to the work of "building up the kingdom." Nonetheless, individual members tended to revere, and the local press to celebrate, the monetary victories and prestige of wealthy Latter-day Saints such as the Huntsmans, the Marriotts, and Steven R. Covey.

The extension of this attitude about the potential corrupting influences of money meant that communal meals should be free of charge. For example, policy dictated that the homemaking luncheon should not cost a penny: "The homemaking day luncheon is an important part of the total Relief Society program because it provides unique opportunities for service, sociability, and practical application of homemaking skills. Relief Society presidents should budget in the yearly request for funds enough to make possible a simple monthly luncheon without financial hardship on the sisters. Bishops

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[306] Spencer W. Kimball, "First Presidency Message," *Ensign*, June 1976.

and branch presidents will understand this to be a legitimate part of the Relief Society operating expenses."[307]

Membership in the Church, however, was not free; faithful members were to pay a minimum of ten percent of their income to the Church as tithing. This tithing financed the Church's general operating expenses, from the construction and upkeep of temples and Church buildings to the budgets each ward received for expenses like homemaking meals. This process distanced members' experiences from the paying of tithing to the receiving of food at luncheons. Thus although members were paying for the food they ate, this distance allowed members to offer food to all who attended, regardless of their financial circumstances or religious background; women did not even need to belong to the Church to attend the meetings. Furthermore, this system allowed charges to be distributed along a continuum where those who earned more paid more. There was no explicit sense of paying for what you ate. With this financing mechanism, attendees participated in an atmosphere where the invitation to learn to prepare good meals was available to all comers.

In contrast, the Nation's attitude toward communal meals was one of open celebration of black enterprise. As members proved their capitalist talents, they challenged racist stereotypes of laziness and stupidity. Communal meals in the Nation were often catered by a Nation Muslim's restaurant. Members bought tickets ahead of time and profits went to the business itself. When paying for these meals, members were aware they were contributing to the business ventures of their coreligionists.

The existence of Nation restaurants was seen as a boon in general. A former project manager for SNCC, and member of the Nation from 1966 to 1970, Gwendolyn Simmons recalls that other members of the community appreciated the clean environment and healthy food of the restaurants; non-Muslim black Americans went there regularly, too. Simmons's job required her to travel a great deal when she was in the Nation, and it was hard to find food on the road that met Nation standards. She was always grateful to get a good meal in a Nation restaurant.[308]

While the restaurants were entrepreneurial successes in and of themselves, they were also community sites where other entrepreneurial successes could be recognized. For example, the awards banquet held the first Sunday of each month for the top salesman (and guest) of *Muhammad Speaks* took place at Salaam Restaurant on Cottage Grove Avenue in Chicago.[309] Throughout its fifteen years of publication, *Muhammad Speaks* was full of ads for businesses owned and products made by Nation Muslims. A majority of these products related to dining, including restaurants, bakeries, grocery stores, juices, and breads.

Sometimes women on the banquet committee prepared food at the Temple rather than at a member-owned restaurant. Men purchased raw ingredients and brought them to the female cooks, and profits went toward Temple expenses such as paying the electrical bill.[310] In these cases, members knew their money went to the upkeep of their temple. I discuss the Nation's relationship to capitalism at length in chapter 2, but mention it here

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[308] Gwendolyn Zohara Simmons, telephone interview by Kate Holbrook, February 6, 2011.
[309] "Every First Sunday Buffet Dinner," *Muhammad Speaks*, December 3, 1971, 13.
[310] Viola Jones Omar, telephone interview by Kate Holbrook, February 17, 2011.

as a reminder that it was foremost in members' minds that to visit the business of a coreligionist or buy a meal at the Temple was to improve the status of their people as a whole. In purchasing a meal Nation Muslims were directly contributing to the financial solvency of either their Temple or their brother's business.

Elijah Muhammad emphasized this sense of communal success at the dedication of Chicago Temple No. 2, which was a great triumph for the Nation. The Temple was expensive, massive, and well designed. When Elijah Muhammad spoke at the building's unveiling, he told the cheering throng, "I will build the kingdom with your wealth."[311] Through this statement he told the crowd to see this building as evidence of their collective financial success, and suggested it was only the beginning.

Unfortunately, because the Nation's businesses were owned by men, the economic value of women's labor became hidden in notions of collective welfare. As an ideal, revering financial success not only excluded women as independent earners but also devalued any men who were struggling to find work or make ends meet. Nonetheless, purchasing food from community members, buying and reading newspapers, attending group meals, and rejoicing in the construction of a fancy Chicago Temple were all modes of experiencing communal triumph as the Nation progressed toward its ideal. Membership in the Nation could make a person feel respectable by association.

LDS and Nation approaches to communal meals came to resemble mainstream culture less in the mid-twentieth century, when mainstream habits began to shift.

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[311] Lonnie Kashif, "Messenger Welcomes Black People to New Temple No. 2: Thousands Cheer Muhammad," *Muhammad Speaks*, June 9, 1972, 4.

Protestant communal meals began to change around the later 1960s, and these changes marked a crucial distinction in philosophy between the "Whitebread Protestants" who increasingly organized themselves to feed the indigent and both Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims, whose philosophy tended toward helping the poor to help themselves (although the LDS Church Welfare Program also provided food for the poor who could not help themselves). Protestants in the 1940s and 1950s, in an attempt to provide alternative, wholesome, church-based entertainment for members and youth, staged elaborate communal meals. But by the 1960s, many began to reconsider and criticize these expenditures and to look to efforts that would benefit the poor. Meals for seniors, Pantry Sundays (collecting food donations), and soup kitchens were born of these attitudes. "These food events," writes food historian Daniel Sack, "were an analogy for the shift in the congregation's self-understanding and its mission, from an inward-focused 'organization church' to an outward-focused and mission-oriented congregation."[312]

It is important to note that neither the Nation nor the LDS Church sponsored soup kitchens of their own. Both of these groups believed uplift would result when the indigent joined them and learned to live according to their principles. They routinely invited outsiders to their events, but less to serve them than to attract them to join. If you wanted a free meal, you came to the Friday services (Nation) or to the ward activity (LDS). Eating together was a way to welcome people into the community; there wasn't the distinction of service givers and service recipients to the same extent as there is at a soup kitchen. The attitude behind this principle, where insiders took outsiders in to their

[312] Sack, *Whitebread Protestants*, 87. The relevant pages for the whole discussion are 85–87.

community, reflected both groups' bootstrapper mentality. They didn't give people handouts, but welcomed them in to their own communities where they would receive the tools to become contributing members. Nation Muslims in particular extended outreach to the urban poor already, but ultimately people had to participate in the program in order to benefit. Both traditions were about self-sufficiency, teaching people to fish instead of giving them fish. And neither group developed soup kitchens.

Protestant community meals also changed during the 1960s as churches began to hire professional cooks to run their kitchens. In part, this change may have been due to wealthier parishioners, who could afford to eat out, demanding restaurant-quality food. But women also may have found themselves with less time to volunteer. Some responded to the nascent second wave feminist movement by joining the workforce, while others heeded messages from child psychologists to spend more time at home with their children.[313] Sack defines this shift as "also chang[ing] the relationship between the church and its members. When members of the church provided the volunteer labor to cook a meal, the church was a community, a place to work together. But when paid cooks prepared the meals, the church was simply a place to eat together, a service provider."[314] Sack does not elaborate on what such a change involved, but we can see that it did not happen to Latter-day Saints as they continued to provide communal meals through volunteer labor. Members saw Church social life as their own responsibility, so when it succeeded it was their success, and when it failed they were the ones beholden to improve. This, too, promoted their culture of self-sufficiency. Nation Muslims sometimes

[313] Ibid., 90.
[314] Ibid., 90–91.

did pay their cooks, but the meaning of the gesture was different for them than for "whitebread Protestants." Nation Muslims had a strong sense that the chef they hired was one of their own, and in hiring her or him, they were supporting their common economic well-being. Thus, even though they might perform the same act as Protestants, hiring a chef instead of relying on volunteer labor to prepare a meal for the community, the consequences were different because they framed it differently. For them, as for the Latter-day Saints, communal meals reinforced the performance of self-sufficiency.

Conclusion

Nation Muslims and Latter-day Saints both choreographed table norms in a way that would prove these outsider religious groups as refined—more refined, in fact—than mainstream American culture. Both groups engaged in the delicate work of determining which table norms from the dominant culture were in line with their own values and sense of identity. In some cases, values were so internalized that communities saw their exercise of those values as distinctive. At other times, leaders pled with members to keep to their own ideals and resist corrupting cultural influences. In their efforts at proving themselves refined, both groups idealized the image of female homemakers. Formal homemaking classes for both focused on cleanliness and proper etiquette, though the vision of etiquette was somewhat different for each. LDS communal meals were supposed to be free of charge—or at least a direct, obvious payment—to convey a sense of generosity while distancing members from contaminating conversations about money. The Nation, on the other hand, celebrated a notion of communal uplift through buying power.

Chapter 4: Not to Eat

Fasting as a religious practice has a long history. Commonly, fasting and other bodily deprivations were intended to cultivate ecstatic experience or promote ascetic discipline. Ancient Hebrew culture associated fasting with self-humiliation or penance, as a means of acknowledging when an individual or community had failed God.[315] Among medieval mystics, fasting represented a form of ritual power available to women.[316]

Scholarly literature on fasting has underappreciated the practice's many benefits as they have been understood by Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims, as well as the role that fasting can play in communal identity formation. Both groups understood fasting as contributing to their status as God's chosen people. In this chapter, I trace the meanings of fasting within the LDS and Nation communities to explore the intersections between ideas about chosenness and food practices. Both in the Bible and in American religious history, fasting had a clear precedent, which allowed both outsider groups to engage in fasting as proof of their religious seriousness. But with the exception of occasional Jewish fasting, other religious groups in the United States simply did not fast for religious reasons during the middle of the twentieth century. Therefore, fasting both separated Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims from white Protestants, who no longer fasted for a religious purpose, and contributed to LDS and Nation assimilation because the notion of chosenness had resonance in American culture. The obvious limitation to

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[315] John Muddiman, "Fast, Fasting," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992).
[316] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

this common understanding of chosenness is that none of these groups, including white Protestants, thought that the other groups were chosen. "Chosenness," then, was an American characteristic, but not all Americans were chosen. Fasting had a clear precedent both in the Bible and in American religious history, which allowed both outsider groups to engage in fasting as proof of their religious seriousness. The chosenness Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims associated with fasting arose in the twentieth century as a demonstration of believers' status as members of God's community.

Claiming a Chosen Identity

In many ways, fasting was one of the practices through which Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims defined themselves as God's chosen people over and above other Americans (many of whom also thought they were God's chosen people). As with other notions these groups embraced, such as Victorian motherhood (discussed in chapter 3), outsiders held tight to fasting although the once-popular practice no longer influenced white Protestants in America. The Puritans had made a direct connection between fasting and their chosen status. According to food historian Martha Finch, "Implementing particular foodways on [fast] days, participants elicited divine favor, distinguished themselves from corrupt English society, and reinforced their sense of divine chosenness and exclusivity."[317] LDS and Nation approaches to fasting significantly resembled these American Puritan beliefs about fasting, a backward cultural assimilation through time.

[317] Martha L. Finch, "Pinched with Hunger, Partaking of Plenty: Fasts and Thanksgivings in Early New England," in *Eating in Eden: Food and American Utopias*, ed. Etta M. Madden and Martha L. Finch (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 37.

But by the time Joseph Smith established the LDS Church in 1830, few Protestants still practiced fasting, leading R. Marie Griffith to conclude, "Joseph Smith's doctrine of fasting, dressed up as social activism and therapeutic cheer, established what has been the most lasting and, at least until very recently, most vigorous model of regular Christian fasting in the Anglo-American world."[318] Neither group approached fasting in its traditional guise of humiliation and repentance, and perhaps this is why their traditions were able to sustain fasting as a viable practice. Americans no longer wanted to fast their way to forgiveness, and neither Latter-day Saints nor Nation Muslims fasted for forgiveness. Latter-day Saints fasted to help the poor, to ask for blessings, to fortify communal bonds, and to improve their relationship with God. Nation Muslims fasted to honor God and (because they did not believe in an afterlife) to live as long as possible. The ancient practice of fasting tied both groups to a sacred genealogy, making them part of God's community.

When I write of a sacred genealogy, I mean the establishment of a group lineage based not in traditional genealogical research but in perceived connections to ancient religions or groups. Latter-day Saints saw themselves as heirs of the Abrahamic covenant; they and those who joined with them became part of the ancient house of Israel. Elijah Muhammad taught that African Americans descended from the ancient and venerable tribe called Shabazz. Ancient Israel clearly existed, and while there is no independent evidence of Shabazz, what mattered for both groups was the reverence and

[318] Griffith, *Born Again Bodies*, 38–39.

authority associated with these ancient peoples. Ancient connections pointed to an authoritative present.

The attempt to tie a modern community to an ancient people may seem idiosyncratic, but when twentieth-century Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims framed their respective communities as God's chosen people, they were appropriating and reformulating the exceptionalism characteristic of American Protestant culture. Of particular note is the way these outsiders internalized the "chosen people" rhetoric just as insiders had done. Scholars of American intellectual history have long observed the ways Americans' understanding of themselves as chosen has influenced social and political narratives.[319] Early colonists also imagined their lives against the backdrop of biblical Israel and themselves as chosen of God as Abraham was. In his famous speech aboard the *Arabella,* John Winthrop highlighted the tie between the chosen Israelites and his fellow passengers, proclaiming that if the Puritans would be righteous, "wee shall finde that the God of Israell is among us, when tenn of us shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies, when hee shall make us a prayse and glory, that men shall say of succeeding plantacions: the lord make it like that of New England."[320] Winthrop warned his audience about the consequences of failure, but he promised success would mean God's

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[319] Andrew Bacevich, *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008); Conrad Cherry, ed., *God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Nicholas Guyatt, *Providence and the Invention of the United States, 1607–1876* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Mark Noll, "The Image of the United States as a Biblical Nation, 1776–1865," in *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History*, ed. Nathan Hatch and Mark Noll (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

[320] John Winthrop, "Christian Charitie. A Modell Hereof," in *Puritan Political Ideas, 1558–1794*, ed. Edmund S. Morgan (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), 92–93.

companionship and reward, as well as the world's acknowledgement of the colonists' holy success. Americans inherited from the Puritans a sense of chosenness that has persisted to the present day.

Since Winthrop's holy experiment, Americans have imagined themselves as special to God and armed with a mandate to act in and on the world as God's people. When the geopolitics of the middle twentieth century allowed America to achieve, for a time, aspirations for world dominance, they entered what theologian Reinhold Niebuhr termed the "irony of American history." For good or ill, Americans have seen themselves as chosen since colonization, with little evidence even now of abatement.[321]

This chapter shows that religious outsiders in America have also appropriated the notion of chosenness as a way of situating themselves as worthy. For example, Joseph Smith insisted that Christians had lost their status as God's chosen people through an apostasy that began centuries before the Puritans settled this land. Just as God called Joseph Smith to restore his true church on the earth (and true chosenness to America), so Allah chose Elijah Muhammad to restore his people to their chosen status. Elijah Muhammad taught that the descendants of displaced slaves, who happened to live in America, were really God's chosen people. Nation Muslims would recover their status by following God's teachings despite the fact that they now lived in America, not because America itself was a chosen land or special to God in any way. The Latter-day Saints, on

[321] Clifford Longley, *Chosen People: The Big Idea That Shaped England and America* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2002); Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (1952; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Andrew Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (New York: Anchor, 2012).

the other hand, restored the gospel in America precisely because it was the "promised land."

Both Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims employed their food habits to reclaim or exercise chosenness. While members of both the LDS Church and the Nation used fasting to reinforce their status as God's chosen people and to elevate the entire community vis-à-vis the surrounding society, fasting as a means of achieving and demonstrating chosenness looked different in each group. Latter-day Saints employed fasting to gain greater access to divine power and authority. They also saw fasting as an ancient means of caring for the poor. Latter-day Saints believed their efforts to overcome social disparities qualified them as a chosen people because by fasting, Saints heeded the biblical injunction of Isaiah. Fasting was one of several ways that Saints recovered the continuity of their identity ancient Israel; fasting solidified their relationships with God and with each other while giving them greater access to God's power. For the Nation, fasting helped members realize their status as the lost-then-found people of Allah. People fasting within the Nation enjoyed the longevity, morality, and intelligence appropriate to Allah's chosen people. Thus the status of God's chosen people was established through present successes—such as improved health—and through associations with ancient groups.

Latter-day Saint Fasting

Early Latter-day Saints went without food and drink for approximately twenty-four hours on the first Thursday of each month.[322] This effort was sometimes directed toward a community goal, such as relieving drought or famine, but more often it addressed private concerns. Saints could also fast on any additional day they chose, relinquishing food and drink for twenty-four hours and praying frequently for the direction or blessings they sought.

Before his death in 1877, Brigham Young made several attempts to establish a regular monthly fast. During one such effort, he taught that feeding the poor had been a major purpose of fasting from the Church's inception under Joseph Smith. Young promised members that if they would fast monthly and submit a generous fast offering, no member would suffer from want of food or housing: "If we were to do this now faithfully, do you think the poor would lack for flour, or butter, or cheese, or meat, or sugar, or anything they needed to eat? No, there would be more than could be used by all the poor among us."[323] In practical terms, LDS fasting benefited the poor because members donated the money they would otherwise have spent on food to a special "fast offering" fund. Young's words demonstrate the LDS vision of a biblical people who would, with God's help, eliminate poverty altogether.

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[322] Fast day was moved to the first Sunday of each month starting in 1896. Glen M. Leonard, "I Have A Question," *Ensign*, March 1998.
[323] *Journal of Discourses* 12:115–16.

Early Saints also held general fasts, although the link between fasting and donations for the poor was not firmly established until several natural disasters in 1855 and 1856 created extensive need. During these years, some wards had to hold two fast days per month in order to raise sufficient funds.[324] Despite the fact that fast offerings were thenceforth an institutionalized monthly practice, not everyone donated. Records show that between 1916 and 1935, payments did not increase in proportion to Church membership.[325] This may have been the basis for welfare director Glen Rudd's impression that up to the Great Depression, "There wasn't much fast offering. People just didn't pay fast offering, to speak of. They had to be taught that, and they were ripe for all that, you see."[326]

By the mid-twentieth century, fasting was one of two main strategies that survived to foster a society that met ancient criteria for economic integrity. (The other strategy was the welfare system discussed in chapter 2.) Even the vision of this society was based on biblical precedent, albeit a distinctively LDS view of that precedent. The goal was in line with an LDS scriptural account of the mythic city Zion, a righteous city built by the biblical patriarch Enoch and his people, where "there was no poor among them."[327] Latter-day Saints often described fasting as building Zion. They looked to fasting not only as an abstention from food but also as a broader spiritual law calling them to ameliorate economic want within their community. Fast offerings both invoked a

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[324] Mangum and Blumell, *The Mormons' War on Poverty*, 63; A. Dean Wengreen, "The Origin and History of the Fast Day in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1955), 58–62.
[325] Peterson, "The Magnitude of the Fast Offerings Paid in the Stakes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1916–1936," 62–63.
[326] Rudd, The Glen L. Rudd Interviews, 18.
[327] Moses 7:18.

respectable spiritual lineage—even making that lineage literal—and decreased extreme poverty among members.

As a missionary, Hugh B. Brown (1883–1975) fasted for an additional reason: to call on God's power so that Brown could enlarge God's church. Brown spent the first days of his LDS mission (1904–1906) leaving proselytizing tracts at homes in Cambridge, England. One evening after he returned, tired and discouraged, to his apartment, a man came to see him. The visitor explained that seventeen families had left the Church of England and had prayed all week that the Lord would send them a new pastor. When he found Brown's tract, he knew the Lord had answered their prayers. Brown later reported,

> Now, I hadn't been in the mission field three days. I didn't know anything about missionary work, and he wanted me to be their pastor. But I was reckless enough to say, "Yes, I'll come." And I repented from then till the time of the meeting. . . . I called in the lady of the house and told her I didn't want any [food]. I went up to my room and prepared for bed. I knelt at my bed. My young brothers and sisters, for the first time in my life I talked with God.[328] I told Him of my predicament. I pleaded for His help. I asked Him to guide me. I pleaded that He would take it off my hands. I got up and went to bed and couldn't sleep and got out and prayed again, and kept that up all night—but I really talked with God.[329]

Brown went without food to fortify his petition to God. He continued fasting and praying throughout the next day. When he met his new congregation of Anglican seceders at 7:00 that evening, he felt reluctant, unqualified, and scared. But when he and the congregation began to pray together, Brown's feelings changed:

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[328] Brown had prayed before but meant here to emphasize that both fasting and a newfound sincerity born of desperation contributed to his improved communication with God.

[329] Hugh B. Brown, "Father, Are You There?" BYU Stakes Fireside Address (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, October 8, 1967), 13–15, cited in *Young Women Manual 2* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1993), 86–87.

> They all knelt down and I knelt down, and for the second time in my life I talked with God. All fear left me. I didn't worry any more. I was turning it over to Him.
>
> I said to Him, among other things, "Father in Heaven, these folks have left the Church of England. They have come here tonight to hear the truth. You know that I am not prepared to give them what they want, but Thou art, O God, the one that can; and if I can be an instrument through whom You speak, very well, but please take over."
>
> When we arose most of them were weeping, as was I. Wisely I dispensed with the second hymn, and I started to talk. I talked 45 minutes. I don't know what I said. I didn't talk—God spoke through me, as subsequent events proved. And He spoke so powerfully to that group that at the close of that meeting they came and put their arms around me, held my hands. They said, "This is what we have been waiting for. Thank God you came."
>
> I told you I dragged myself down to that meeting. On my way back home that night I only touched ground once, I was so elated that God had taken off my hands an insuperable task for man.
>
> Within three months every man, woman and child in that audience was baptized a member of the Church. . . . I have seen some of them in recent years. They are elderly people now, but they say they never have attended such a meeting, a meeting where God spoke to them.[330]

The effect of fasting could be both individual and communal. Brown's account of this mission experience illustrates two LDS reasons for fasting: for personal access to the power of God and for a connection to the larger community of Saints. Brown was on a mission to help establish the Zion community of the LDS Church. Brown's individual fast resulted in a personal demonstration of God's power. Fasting "worked" for Brown because of his faith and sincerity and because his cause—trying to bolster the community of God's chosen people—was just. When Brown fasted and prayed, God's power met his spiritual needs and those of his new friends, the Anglican seceders. Only one man fasted, but since his goal was to fortify God's community, the fast had a unifying effect. The entire group, in their search for God's chosen church, also experienced the power of

[330] Brown, "Father, Are You There?"

God's spirit as a result of their own prayers and Brown's fast. For participants, the experience demonstrated that Latter-day Saints were God's people, members of his chosen (or "true," as they would say) church.

Building Zion: Community and Chosenness

Hugh B. Brown's experiences fit within a longstanding LDS fasting tradition, but LDS fasting traditions did not merely extend back seven decades to the earliest days of their faith; Latter-day Saints saw themselves and their religion as restoring ancient truths and practices to the world. They wished not only to read the Old Testament but to become its people. Americans saw themselves as God's chosen people, but Latter-day Saints made this more literal. When joining the LDS Church, members were adopted into the lineage of Abraham—becoming "chosen" right alongside ancient Israel—regardless of their native ethnic background.[331] Fasting was part of an attempt to create an Old Testament society in modern America. When Latter-day Saints participated in fasting, they saw themselves as ethnically one with Isaiah and other ancient prophets, engaging in a practice that God had instituted in his earliest dealings with humanity. In one of the passages Latter-day Saints most loved to quote when speaking of fasting, Isaiah declared that a primary purpose of fasting was to help the poor:

> Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? / Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring

[331] Armand L. Mauss, *All Abraham's Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 2–3, 30, 50. See also Samuel Morris Brown, *In Heaven As It Is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 216–17.

> the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him.[332]

By following the lead of this Bible passage, Latter-day Saints took up their responsibility in fulfilling God's law for Israel.

Whereas membership in the original Israelite tradition was a strict genealogical birthright, the LDS heritage of chosenness was available to anyone willing to adopt the LDS moral code and demonstrate commitment and conversion through LDS baptism. Latter-day Saints constantly reinforced their Israelite heritage through religious practices that included fasting, service to the poor, tithing of their income, temple worship, patriarchal blessings, and interpretation of miracles.[333]

The initial 1838 revelation that required Saints to pay tithing linked it directly to the understanding of their new church as Zion, or God's church. "And I say unto you, if my people observe not this law, to keep it holy, and by this law sanctify the land of Zion unto me, that my statutes and my judgments may be kept thereon, that it may be most holy, behold, verily I say unto you, it shall not be a land of Zion unto you."[334] Zion referred both to God's people and to the geographical location where they lived. Therefore, this revelation states that if God's people do not pay tithing, they will cease to be God's people.[335] When lessons addressed the topic of tithing in the mid-twentieth

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[332] Isaiah 58:6–7.

[333] Historians Richard Hughes and Leonard Allen wrote the standard treatment of this LDS primordialism. Richard T. Hughes and Crawford Leonard Allen, *Illusions of Innocence: Protestant Primitivism in America, 1630–1875* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

[334] Doctrine and Covenants 119:6

[335] The LDS Bible Dictionary defines Zion: "The word *Zion* is used repeatedly in all the standard works of the Church and is defined in latter-day revelation as "the pure in heart" (D&C 97:21). Other usages of Zion have to do with a geographical location. For example, Enoch built a city that was called Zion (Moses 7:18–19); Solomon built his temple on Mount Zion (1 Kgs. 8:1; see also 2 Sam. 5:6–7); and Jackson County,

century, they invariably quoted Malachi from the Hebrew Bible: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."[336] Quoting Malachi emphasized that tithing had always been a part of God's law and that paying tithing linked members to an Israelite relationship with God. The scripture was so linked with tithing that producers named a 1963 film about tithing and past Church president Lorenzo Snow *Windows of Heaven*.[337]

Temple building was an additional means of restoring God's original church. When Latter-day Saints built their first temples, they believed they were restoring Solomon's Temple. The standard LDS text on temples for the twentieth century was Apostle James Talmage's *The House of the Lord: A Study of Holy Sanctuaries, Ancient and Modern* (1912).[338] Here Talmage argued strongly that LDS temples precisely replicated the structures and liturgies of First Temple Hebrew practice. To explain why LDS temples resembled Masonic rites, independent scholar Michael Homer reviewed early LDS claims that Masons were from the temple of Solomon, so Masonic-looking rituals in LDS Temples were really from Solomon's temple.[339]

Missouri, is called Zion in many of the revelations in the D&C." Bible Dictionary, in *The Holy Bible, King James Version* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979), s.v. "Zion."

[336] Malachi 3:10

[337] Judge Whitaker, *Windows of Heaven* (Brigham Young University, 1963).

[338] James Edward Talmage, *The House of the Lord: A Study of Holy Sanctuaries, Ancient and Modern* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1912), 110–11. There were three different editions of *House of the Lord* published in the 1960s alone.

[339] Michael Homer, "'Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry': The Relationship Between Freemasonry and Mormonism," *Dialogue* 27, no. 3 (Fall 1994).

Similarly, Latter-day Saints not only restored the practice of patriarchal blessings but used them to identify themselves as descendants of a specific tribe of Israel. "Nearly every member of the Church is a literal descendant of Jacob who gave patriarchal blessings to his 12 sons, predicting what would happen to them and their posterity after them."[340] As a Church pamphlet explains, patriarchs giving a blessing identified from which tribe the blessing recipient descended:

> Declaration of lineage means to tell (or declare) the tribe of Israel to which one belongs. As declared by the patriarchs, most Latter-day Saint members are literally descended by blood or by adoption from Joseph through Ephraim. . . . Receiving your lineage is probably the most important part of your blessing, for it gives you the right, based on your faithfulness, to the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.[341]

Identifying lineage was the most important part of the blessing because it confirmed the literal connection between the Church member and the covenant that defined Abraham and his descendants as God's people. Even the LDS priesthood system was seen as a continuation not only of the church that Christ established during his life[342] but also of the ancient religion of Israel. They named their forms of priesthood after the Hebrew Bible figures who had exercised it: Aaron and Melchizedek.[343] Believers thus located themselves within a powerful, sacred ethnicity as they insisted that the LDS Church was no mere Protestant sect but an actual restoration of ancient Israel.

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[340] Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), 558.
[341] *Patriarchal Blessings Questions and Answers* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978), Church History Library.
[342] Latter-day Saints credit the apostles with continuing their Savior's work but believe Christ succeeded in establishing a church with codified religious practices before his death.
[343] Jan Shipps rehearsed the LDS self-understanding as the reinstatement of ancient Israel, especially in Smith's use of a "Melchizedek priesthood. Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 74–77.

Some official discussions of fasting defined it as part of this restoration. In 1956, future Church president Joseph Fielding Smith assured members that fasting was an ancient and venerable practice:

> Fasting we may well assume is a religious custom that has come down from the beginning of time, and always associated with prayer. . . . It was common in the most ancient times, and there are numerous incidents recorded in the Old Testament indicating that it was well established not only among the true worshipers of Deity but also among the heathen nations. All of this indicates the antiquity of fasting, which we may presume was revealed to Adam.[344]

In a 1972 *Ensign* article, Brigham Young University (BYU) religion professor Robert J. Matthews emphasized the continuity of fasting as God's law by discussing it in terms of many different kinds of scripture, including the Doctrine and Covenants, the Book of Mormon, the New Testament, and the Hebrew Bible. Using the latter, he explained that Queen Esther and her people fasted for three days and nights for deliverance from their Persian king, that Daniel fasted for his son to live, that the Psalms referred to fasting in terms of self-mastery and discipline, and that Isaiah taught that correct fasting was to free the oppressed, feed the hungry, and clothe the naked.[345] These beliefs invited fasting Church members to understand themselves as participating in the same ritual behavior as God's chosen people had from the very beginning of God's recorded dealings with humanity.

Perhaps surprisingly in the context of this restorative endeavor, LDS dietary habits did not require adherence to Jewish *kashrut*. They did honor an Israelite sense of inherited divine stewardship through appropriate economic relationships, grounded in

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[344] Joseph Fielding Smith, "Prayer and Fasting," *Improvement Era*, December 1956.
[345] Robert J. Matthews, "What the Scriptures Say About Fasting," *New Era*, September 1972.

food and the regulation of it (fasting). Latter-day Saints did not denigrate kosher eating, but neither did they see it as necessary. *Kashrut* would have been difficult to follow for a people frequently on the move, as the early Saints were. But so was building temples. Perhaps this elaborate health law would have separated them too severely from potential converts. Most likely, it was too culturally alien during the formative period when Joseph Smith was shaping Church customs. Masons during the era built temples, Thomsonians pursued dietary guidelines much like the Word of Wisdom, Catholics operated through priesthood, evangelical ministers gave blessings reminiscent of patriarchal blessings,[346] but no other Christians observed *kashrut.*

As Matthews emphasized above, fasting was a biblical method to unite rich with poor in a common deprivation while providing material resources for the benefit of the poor. An LDS devotional volume by Alan Johnson explained in 1963, "Latter-day Saints have been asked to contribute the amount saved by their abstinence from food for this period to a general fund for the care of the poor. . . . In all ages, according to the scriptures, God has commended his Saints to care for the poor in their midst."[347] As discussed in chapter 2, Latter-day Saints in their early decades had pursued a number of strategies to provide for the poor as a corrective to the economic exploitation decried by Jeremiah, Isaiah, and other Hebrew prophets.[348]

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[346] Brown, *In Heaven As It Is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death*, 213.
[347] Alan P. Johnson, *Fasting: The Second Step to Eternal Life: A Study of the Spiritual, Physical, and Historical Aspects of Fasting* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1963), 188. This was a version of his 1960 master's thesis in religious instruction at BYU.
[348] Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958); Feramorz Fox, Dean L. May, and Leonard J. Arrington, *Building the City of God: Community & Cooperation Among the Mormons* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976).

Thus fast offerings constituted one of the main ways members could regularly care for the less fortunate. Emphasis on fasting also fostered solidarity with the poor through shared experience. By going hungry, the believer who fasted remembered the suffering of those who were often hungry by accident rather than by choice: in Alan Johnson's phrase, "One who fasts goes without food so that, by being hungry, he may experience the same feeling of need as the one whom he assists with his fast offering. This produces within the one who fasts a greater appreciation for his fellow men's situation."[349] The intentional, monthly exercise in empathy could act as a hedge against individuals' perceptions of their own social privilege and proved important to the broader work of creating a coherent community.

Access to Spiritual Power

Fasting and devoting fast offerings to the hungry was the calling of God's people, and it strengthened the Latter-day Saint sense of connection to ancient Israel. But as God's people, Latter-day Saints also had the privilege of fasting for immediate, tangible results through access to spiritual power. Various traditions have attributed spiritual sensitivity and power to the successful practitioner. In medieval times, Christian female mystics, for example, gained status and privilege through fasting and received visions as a result of fasting.[350] Though they were much less abstemious than earlier ascetics, Latter-day Saints believed fasting substantially increased the efficacy of prayer.

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[349] Johnson, *Fasting*, 189.
[350] Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, 227.

Church general authority Hartman Rector Jr. gave an example of this understanding of fasting during the Latter-day Saints' April 1970 general conference. He told how he had been a local Church leader while missionaries met with a man whose wife was a Latter-day Saint. The man wanted to join the Church, but he could not quit smoking, which was prohibited by the LDS Word of Wisdom. The man told the missionaries that he had tried to quit many times, but that he could not. Rector felt God's spirit suggest that Rector, six stake missionaries, the potential member, and his wife could fast for him to overcome the addiction. The couple agreed, and together they all decided to fast for two days.

At the end of the fast, the missionaries and Rector met in the couple's home, where they took turns praying. Rector recalled,

> The prayers were essentially the same; they were, that the Lord would take from this brother his desire to smoke. He was the last to pray and then he arose and announced, "I have no desire to smoke." He hasn't smoked unto this day. Since that time he has served in the bishopric of his ward and . . . in a stake [Young Men presidency]. He is today a stalwart in the faith, a real servant of the Lord. The Lord literally took from him his weakness and made him a tower of strength instead.[351]

In this example, Latter-day Saints believed the discipline of fasting strengthened their capacity to resist temptations. They also believed that coming together as a group in a shared fast would have greater power than fasting individually.

Latter-day Saints often cited increased personal discipline as a benefit of fasting. Fasting could strengthen their resolve against physical temptation. At the same time, fasting was a display of physical mastery. For Latter-day Saints, skipping two meals on

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[351] Hartman Rector Jr., "From Weakness to Strength," *Ensign*, April 1970, 140.

the first Sunday of each month was a physical sacrifice. Many found it difficult. But the difficulty proved to them that they were capable of arduous practice in the cause of becoming a Zion people.

Nation of Islam Fasting

As with the Latter-day Saints, a sacred genealogy was foundational to Nation teachings and practice. Eating only once per day and fasting monthly for two or three days were key components for Nation Muslims to reclaim their chosen status as members of the tribe of Shabazz, the mythic progenitor of the entire black race. Members of Shabazz were venerable and ideal; correct eating rhythms could restore this character to members of the Nation. Elijah Muhammad did not provide detailed information about the character of members of Shabazz, and he did not intend that his people would come to resemble them exactly, but they did inherit the chosen status of that tribe. Nation Muslims absorbed thinking about chosenness from mainstream culture, but they rejected that culture's chosen status and took it for themselves. Knowing they were chosen, they would learn to appear and behave as chosen and vice versa. The symbolic resonance of daily and monthly eating rhythms was as important to Nation Muslims' understanding of themselves as chosen as was the physical impact of eating at correct intervals. But temporally correct eating did more than remind them who they were; as we shall see, it also helped them to live long and to increase their moral discipline and intelligence.

Lost and Found

Elijah Muhammad taught that originally Shabazz was venerable because it was ancient, hardy, brave, and strong. In his words, Shabazz was

> the tribe that came with the earth (or this part) 66 trillion years ago. . . . We were the first to discover the best part of our planet to live on. The rich Nile Valley of Egypt and the present seat of the Holy City, Mecca, Arabia. The origin of our kinky hair, says Allah, came from one of our dissatisfied scientists, 50,000 years ago who wanted to make all of us tough and hard in order to endure the life of the jungles of East Asia (Africa) and to overcome the beasts there. . . . He took his family and moved into the jungle to prove to us that we could live there and conquer the wild beasts, and we have. . . . We are the mighty, the wise, the best, but do not know it.[352]

Muhammad also frequently specified that whites were inferior: "The white race is far from being able to equal the power and wisdom of the original Black man."[353] Descending from among those who first created civilizations on Earth mattered to Elijah Muhammad. White Anglo-Saxon Protestant Americans might trace their ancestry to the esteemed *Mayflower*, but Elijah Muhammad looked farther and higher to the glory that was Egypt. He described his ancestors as wise, learning to find the best places to live, but also so brave that they intentionally lived in some of the world's most dangerous places.

One of Elijah Muhammad's most consistent messages was that members of the black race were chosen as God's people, despite the fact that others had deceived them about their illustrious identity for centuries. Over and over again he emphasized how essential it was for his people to understand their true worth: "It is knowledge of self that the so-called Negroes lack. . . . It is Allah's (God's) will and purpose that we shall know

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[352] Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman in America*, 31–32.
[353] Elijah Muhammad, *The Mother Plane: Elijah Muhammad's Analysis of Ezekiel's Wheel* (Phoenix: Elijah Muhammad Books, 2004), 48.

ourselves. He has declared that we are descendants of the Asian black nation and of the tribe of Shabazz."[354]

Elijah Muhammad's use of ethnic terms can be disorienting. Here he described his progenitors as Asian and elsewhere he used the term Asiatic. His words (taken from the FBI) on August 30, 1942, help to define what he meant by Asiatic: "The Asiatic race is made up of all dark-skinned people, including the Japanese and the Asiatic black man."[355] Members of the Moorish Science Temple, which included Elijah Muhammad before he joined the Nation of Islam, also claimed an Asiatic identity.[356] Elijah Muhammad designated both ancient Egypt and Mecca in the time of the Prophet Muhammad as key epochs of black accomplishment from which his people descended. Africa entered the legacy because a noble ancestor went to Africa for the challenge of living there, but Elijah Muhammad maintained a sense that his people were inherently "Asiatic," not African. They were Asians who had come to live in Africa, then America.

Regardless of whether individual Nation Muslims believed they were literal, physical descendants of Shabazz, the perception of African Americans as chosen resonated with Elijah Muhammad's followers.[357] Sulayman Nyang an African studies professor at Howard University, has argued, "By defining themselves as *blacks and not negroes*, the members of the NOI radically altered the rules of the naming game firmly

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[354] Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman in America*, 31.
[355] Nathaniel Deutsch, "'The Asiatic Black Man': An African American Orientalism?", *Journal of Asian American Studies* 4, no. 3 (2001): 193–208.
[356] Evanzz, *The Messenger*, 62–63.
[357] Montgomery, interview.

established for generations by the dominant white society."[358] Nyang further suggests that future historians will likely conclude that Elijah Muhammad's "counterracist racist" ideology "created the necessary psychological conditions for many underclass blacks from America's ghettos to rise economically and socially to the point that they could compete with whites and others in the U.S. without any complexes about their blackness."[359]

An important part of these psychological conditions was to reject the conception of God as a white man. Referencing God as Allah already made him less white—most of the people who worshiped Allah were not white, as opposed to the white people who worshipped a white God. Fard had not been white, and Muhammad said that he was God. Muhammad also specified that God was black. "To accept your own means yourself and your kind," he explained, "your God Who is of you and you are of Him. It was your [black] fathers who created the heavens and the earth, while there is nothing that the white man has created independently."[360] Muhammad also explained that people may not have envisioned God as black prior to his teachings simply because of white racist power in defining religious ideas: "The white race does not like to worship a black god and his prophets. They are too proud to recognize a black prophet or god."[361]

Richard Brent Turner argues these notions of a black god and noble black ancestry were even more present in the Nation of Islam than they had been in the Moorish Science Temple:

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[358] Sulayman S. Nyang, "The Honorable Elijah Muhammad and the Black Quest for Identity in the U. S.," in Rashad, *Elijah Muhammad and the Ideological Foundation of The Nation of Islam*, 251.
[359] Ibid., 252.
[360] Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman in America*, 42.
[361] Ibid., 93.

> Signification was at the center of the conversion experience for members of this movement. No other black religious or political group up to this time had talked so explicitly and convincingly about the psychological damage that slavery had done to black Americans. . . . The Asiatics were the "original" human beings, whose ancient civilization included the Nile Valley and the holy city of Mecca.[362]

Nation Muslims therefore embraced such protestations as boxer Muhammad Ali made on a Louisiana radio show: "I am not a Negro. . . . I am Muhammad Ali. . . . And I am an Asiatic black man."[363]

Elijah Muhammad frequently referred to his people as "lost and found," meaning they had been lost during four hundred years of slavery but now were found. In a 1962 radio broadcast, Muhammad described what it meant for them to be found:

> Fly to your God, Who is seeking you to accept you in power forever on this planet Earth. . . . We have been found now and you don't have to be frightened to death. And you don't have to wander without an aim. You have been found, and you are, no more, termed Lost or Forsaken. You have a God on your side today.[364]

Having a God on their side, albeit one they had to seek, or "fly to," meant fearlessness, purpose, and protection. Nation Muslims were God's people and would evermore know and feel themselves as such.

Now that they were found, they had to learn proper eating rhythms. Black people living in America had forgotten not only that they were chosen but also how to behave as chosen. Restoring proper eating rhythms was part of the larger restoration of their identity. Elijah Muhammad taught his people to eat once a day and fast once a month so

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[362] Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience*, 156.
[363] Deutsch, "The Asiatic Black Man."
[364] Elijah Muhammad, "The Tribe of Shabazz," accessed December 22, 2010, http://www.muhammadspeaks.com/shabazz.html.

they could wield the symbolic power of correct eating. He contrasted the regimented hungers of the chosen members of the Nation with the debauched ones encouraged by white people. When black people knew who they were, they possessed the self-mastery to eat according to the disciplined rhythms of God's people, whereas whites were insatiable in their destructive hungers. In fact, the reason blacks had been lost for a time was that whites had consumed them:

> This black people of America, who have been swallowed symbolically by the white slave-master and his children, must now be brought out of this race of people and be taught the knowledge of their own. . . . Allah [Master Fard Muhammad] . . . has chosen us today to be His people and means to take us and build and establish forever a people of righteousness and a people with unlimited knowledge of the Divine Supreme Being.[365]

Knowledge of self and knowledge of the divine were key to becoming unswallowed, or no longer blinded by the all-consuming slave master. Elijah Muhammad taught, "There are so many untruths that the people of untruth (white race) have mislead [*sic*] us in. We must come out of untruth, we must come out of falsehood."[366]

Eating at the right times reinforced members' identity as God's chosen people, worthy of their inheritance, by restoring longevity, morality, and intelligence. Correct eating rhythms also helped community members to understand their true, elevated nature, and nourished communal relationships.

Nation of Islam Fasting Practices

What did fasting entail for Nation Muslims? First, Elijah Muhammad taught that members should eat only once a day or even once every other day: "Eat one meal a day

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[365] Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman in America*, 49.
[366] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 2*, 52.

or one meal every other day, and it will prolong your life. Do not think that you will starve. On the contrary, you will be treating yourself to life, and a life filled with sickless days."[367] Nation Muslims were not to eat between these meals, and they were to eat at the same time each day, so that their bodies and hunger could adjust to a predictable routine. Elijah Muhammad specified that this practice was not fasting but simply the correct way to eat.

Fasting, on the other hand, took place once a month and lasted for two or three days. To make the transition to eating once a day, or once every other day, Nation Muslims were to alter their eating habits gradually, not suddenly changing from three meals a day to one every other day. Children under age sixteen were to eat at least two meals a day.[368] Women who were pregnant or breastfeeding could choose how often to eat but were not to fast: "And do not take fasts while you are breastfeeding an infant or even while you are pregnant. If you like, you may eat once a day while pregnant or breast-feeding your baby, but you are not forced to do so. You should not go for two or three days without eating."[369] Further, Muhammad advised people who performed heavy manual labor to eat more than once every two or three days.[370]

These cautions show his concern; Elijah Muhammad did not want anyone to jeopardize her health by skipping meals. He wanted to augment everyone's good health. Muhammad taught that original people were healthy and lived for a long time because they did not eat too often: "They, the white devils, are not here to teach us, the Lost and

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[367] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 1*, 22.
[368] Ibid., 60; Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 2*, 90.
[369] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 2*, 90.
[370] Ibid., 10.

Found members of the Aboriginal Nation, to live a long life. . . . Eating as beasts eat (Holy Qur-an) all during the day and night will kill us at an early age. . . . WE ARE A LONG WAY off from the life of the people on Mars, Who Allah in the Person of Master Fard Muhammad, to Whom Praise is due forever, taught me, lived an average life of the equivalent of 1200 years of our Earth calendar."[371] Even people from other planets knew enough to regulate their eating so they could live long.

Fasting and Ramadan

Elijah Muhammad used fasting to distinguish his followers from both other Muslims and mainstream Americans by requiring they fast each year in December. Thus fasting doubly separated Nation Muslims from many Americans, because white Protestants no longer practiced fasting and because Muhammad used it to interrupt a holiday dear to their hearts. On the other hand, shifting Ramadan to Christmas suggested assimilation as well as separation because the shift itself engaged American Christianity. Once again, eating habits represent simultaneous processes of separation and assimilation.

Observing Ramadan at the right time of year was one way that temporally correct eating helped Nation Muslims to "come out of falsehood" and demonstrate remarkable self-discipline. Although Nation Muslims today observe Ramadan with the rest of the Muslim world, under Elijah Muhammad they always observed Ramadan during the month of December. The eating shift during Ramadan was not major; it only meant that the one regular meal was taken after sunset.

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[371] Ibid., 7.

But Elijah Muhammad wanted his people to observe Ramadan during December to remind them of their distinction from American culture: "WHY DID I prescribe for you the month of December? It is because it was in this month that you used to worship a dead prophet by the name of Jesus. And, it was the month that you wasted your money and wealth to worship the 25th day of this month, December, as the Christians do."[372] Fasting in December was a protest against what Muhammad thought of as the lies of Santa Claus, holiday consumerism, and the birth of Jesus, which he insisted even Christians did not believe happened in December:

> I am not asking my followers to FAST in the month of December because of the birth of a prophet (Jesus) nor do we want to worship his birth or worship because some great revelation was sent down to another prophet. No, it is just to keep my followers from worshipping falsehood, instead of truth, and to prevent them from spending their money in the falsehood of Santa Claus.[373]

Correct adherence to the symbolism of fasting during Ramadan underscored Nation Muslims' chosen status by clearing away the misconceptions imposed by white people.

Rejecting holiday fare each day reminded members frequently of their religious commitment, strengthening their ties to community, and separating them from the activities going on around them. They could not attend holiday luncheons or sample holiday fare during the day. Although they were accustomed to eating once a day year-round, approaching the Christmas season as Ramadan, a time set apart for spiritual development, provided stark contrast to the feasting, shopping, and gift giving that other Americans were doing. Honoring Ramadan during December was an invitation for

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[372] Ibid., 48.
[373] Ibid., 52.

Nation Muslims to spend time together, where they could pursue their dietary and spiritual goals in an atmosphere that was supportive instead of alienating.

The Nation's Ramadan practice didn't just isolate members from other Americans but from mainstream Muslims as well. Elijah Muhammad criticized other Muslims for eating too much during Ramadan: "IN the case of Orthodox Muslims worshipping Ramadan by not eating until after sunset, and darkness approaches (they can eat all night long if they want to, until the next morning at dawn) - they call this a FAST!"[374] His objections to mainstream Islam did not stop with Ramadan, however. His theological understandings were a complex mix of biblical teachings, Qur'anic insights, and the words of W. D. Fard (which he understood to be God's unmediated teachings). For example, he was influenced by Jesus's teachings that his disciples need not fast when he was with them but only when he was away.[375] Fasting would help disciples to feel closer to God when they were away from him. Elijah Muhammad considered it foolish to fast during the time that God supposedly revealed the Qur'an to Muhammad. Why would anyone need to fast during this period of revelation? Fasting was for times of separation from God. He also believed that reception of the Qur'an had taken years, not a month, so it made no sense to observe that process for a single month.

> THEY say that they do this in the Month of Ramadan because Ramadan is the month in which the Holy Quran was revealed to Muhammad. BUT, the way that I understand scripture, it teaches us that Muhammad received the Holy Qur-an over a period of twenty-three (23) years. MUHAMMAD did not receive the Holy Qur-an in one night or in one day. And, if he received the whole Holy Qur-an in the month of Ramadan, WHY FAST in that month? IF we are given what we want (Holy Qur'an) in that month,

[374] Ibid., 50.
[375] Matt 9:14–15.

> without FASTING, I cannot understand why we should FAST in the month of Ramadan, for the first revelation of the Holy Qur'an was already given in that month, without FASTING.[376]

Muslims recognized Ramadan observance as one of their core tenets, one of the Five Pillars. In questioning not only when and how they fast, but why they fast, Elijah Muhammad very boldly proclaimed his more up-to-date wisdom as superior to theirs. The Nation approach to celebrating Ramadan at Christmastime thus distinguished Nation Muslims from both other Americans, with their gift giving and feasting, and other Muslims, whom he accused of eating too much and fasting during the wrong season. But this distinction was made in the familiar American context of being God's chosen; they knew when and how to fast because God had singled them out and instructed them.

Physical Health and Longevity

The impulse to connect health and longevity with divine chosenness is ancient. In the Hebrew Bible, Daniel and his friends rejected Babylonian meat for ten days in favor of pulse (a legume), and at the end of that period they were stronger and more glorious than any who had eaten Gentile food.[377]

This connection between health and chosenness also flourished in broader American culture, so the fruits of fasting heralded Nation Muslim assimilation with American culture in the form of these shared values. For example, beginning in the 1920s, incoming students to exclusive colleges were photographed nude and some

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[376] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 2*, 50–51.
[377] Michael D. Coogan et al., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha, Third Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3.

institutions denied admission to those who appeared to be physically unfit.[378] One infamous proponent of this thinking was William Herbert Sheldon (1898–1977), whose theories were heavily influenced by eugenics with its attendant racist and classist ideals. His books, published between 1936 and 1975, demonstrate his conflation of belief in God and the pursuit of eugenics. To advance the laws of genetics was to honor God. Sheldon's work was sufficiently mainstream "that between 1940 and 1952 it received acclaim in household magazines ranging from *Popular Science* and *Scientific Monthly* to *Harper's Monthly, Time, Cosmopolitan, Ladies Home Journal, Women's Home Companion,* and *Life*."[379] Because Sheldon's work corresponded with the ideal of his day, it sold very well through successive editions.[380] "Sheldon remained comfortably situated in the Ivy League world, taking naked photographs of the nation's elite young men and women, precisely because his work fit so well into previous models of character examination by bodily measurement."[381] Worthy people, "chosen" people, could be identified by the shape of their bodies.

Elijah Muhammad also made connections between physical appearance, behaviors, and moral character, and he was determined to train his people to claim their places among the elite. The temporal patterns of correct eating (once a day or less, with periods of monthly fasting) marked a crucial element that distinguished the Nation

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[378] Griffith, *Born Again Bodies*, 134; David Yosifon and Peter N. Stearns, "The Rise and Fall of American Posture," *American Historical Review* 103, no. 4 (October 1998): 1057–95.
[379] Griffith, *Born Again Bodies*, 136; Sarah W. Tracy, "An Evolving Science of Man: The Transformation and Demise of American Constitutional Medicine, 1920–1950," in *Greater Than the Parts: Holism in Biomedicine, 1920–1950*, ed. Christopher Lawrence and George Weisz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 187n58.
[380] Griffith, *Born Again Bodies*, 137.
[381] Ibid., 135.

Muslim from the unregenerate African American, the former slave. African Americans for generations had labored against a prejudice that labeled them as physically unrestrained. Poor and hungry, they ate whenever opportunity arose. By eating once a day, or once every other day, Nation Muslims served notice that they could regulate one of the body's most basic appetites. Elijah Muhammad wrote, "In the past, our appetite was our God. We ate as many times a day as we could find an appetite to. We worshipped our appetite as though it was our God. This shortens our lives."[382] Here he emphasized eating less frequently for longevity as well as making a break between slave habits and those of the Nation of Islam. Nation Muslims did not worship appetite; they were masters of their appetites. Thus the symbolism of correct eating habits, and the attractive bodies they produced, fed Nation Muslims' ability to live as chosen beings would.

Eating once a day was also a way to capture longevity, and Elijah Muhammad prioritized longevity. For example, he wrote, "If Noah and Methuselah had heard you boasting that your parents lived only 75 or 80 years eating poison, they would have considered your parents as never having grown up to become adults, according to their good way of eating the best food, about twice a week, and living nearly 1,000 of our present calendar years which consists of 365 days."[383] Muhammad attributed Noah and Methuselah's famous long lives to regular abstention from food. He even advised that longevity was the main reason for fasting, "THE BIBLE'S teaching on fasting is mostly spiritual purposes. On one occasion, we find where Moses fasted for the cure of his sister,

[382] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 1*, 76.
[383] Ibid., 18.

Miriam, who had contracted leprosy because of speaking carelessly of Moses. Her brother (Moses) then had to seek a cure from God for her. But fasting, as Allah prescribed for us, is to prolong our lives with better health by eating the right food and not eating too frequently."[384] Elijah Muhammad thus stated explicitly that fasting was not about invoking God's power to heal, as Latter-day Saints believed. The Bible taught people to fast for "spiritual purposes," but Nation Muslims knew better; they were to fast to prolong their lives and enjoy better health. By demonstrating their superior understanding of the true goal of fasting, they showed themselves to be God's chosen people.

Although Elijah Muhammad spoke in more detail about the physical benefits of fasting than he did the spiritual, he did believe that fasting yielded spiritual benefits.[385] He believed it brought people closer to God. Nation Muslims seeking optimal spiritual development, he taught, should fast for three days. "A FAST should be from two (2) to three (3) days without eating food. If we are seeking spiritual advancement, we should fast for three days."[386] But such spiritual growth was always secondary to fasting's primary purpose of extending life. Chapter titles from *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 2*, further demonstrate Elijah Muhammad's concern with longevity: "A Return to Long Life," "Lengthen Your Life," "Live Long," "Fasting, Eating Right Foods, Key to Long Life," and "Prolong Your Life" all emphasize this priority.

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[384] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 2*, 46.
[385] Ibid., 52.
[386] Ibid., 50.

Elijah Muhammad taught that the link between fasting and longevity existed because 1) poisons built up in the body when people ate more than once a day; and 2) internal organs wore out the more they were used to digest food. Thus, fasting gave the body opportunity to rid itself of toxins. Muhammad believed that even the best food had poisonous elements—his version of the auto-intoxication hypothesis prominent in much scientific thought through the early twentieth century. According to auto-intoxication theory (which even led to prophylactic excision of the colon in some unfortunate patients in early twentieth-century London), the presence of too many byproducts of food and digestion in the colon for too long caused severe health problems. Though often difficult to distinguish from general concerns over the social and medical meanings of constipation, this sense of food as a potential poison was prominent in the literature of auto-intoxication.[387] According to Elijah Muhammad, the body required twenty-four hours of uninterrupted digestion to fully dispose of those poisonous elements:

> Every meal that we put in our bodies has some poison in it. And, some of our food . . . takes 36 hours to digest. If we do not wait until our previous meal has been digested [and] we add a new meal to the previous meal we have new poison, in its full strength, to aid the dying poison of the previous meal or to help it to revive in strength; and we will continue to be sick.[388]

Elijah Muhammad also believed that food contained harmful germs, which would die if left to starve: "We have to safeguard our health against the enemies of our health by eating one meal a day. This gives an enemy (germ) that may be in our food time to die—

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[387] Whorton, *Inner Hygiene*.
[388] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 2*, 39.

to be completely dead at the end of twenty-four hours."[389] Mainstream thinking on auto-intoxication relied on the notion that bacterial breakdown products seeped into the bloodstream when food spent too long in the colon. In Elijah Muhammad's hands, healthy digestion was a question of balance and flow to be regulated through the timing of food intake rather than through laxatives or fiber-rich diets, as in standard auto-intoxication theory. In Muhammad's hands the scientific theory focused more on individual poisons and germs than on the broad flow of nutrition and digestion. I discuss Muhammad's concern with poisonous foods at greater length in chapter 5.

Correct eating was also important to prevent wearing out one's stomach. Under the subtitle "Live a Thousand Years," Elijah Muhammad explained, "We think we cannot miss a meal, unless we are unable to buy the next meal. So we wear out our stomachs that could possible [*sic*] live a thousand years, if cared for and protected from the enemies that will shorten and destroy our lives."[390] More often, he spoke in less dramatic terms, aiming for a century instead of a millennium: "Master Fard Muhammad, to Whom Praises are due forever, comes to prolong our lives, not to shorten them, by correcting our eating habits to one meal a day instead of three, and by teaching us to eat the proper foods that will not destroy us or shorten our lives to less than 100 years."[391] Here Elijah Muhammad framed his promises of longevity in terms of scientific physiology, pointing to the scientific thinking that was another legacy of Shabazz.

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[389] Ibid., 45.
[390] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 1*, 76.
[391] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 2*, 14.

Elijah Muhammad encouraged people toward longevity for a simple reason: there was no afterlife, so this life was all they had. But that reason was also profoundly life affirming. Were life desperate, dreary, and full of suffering, members might have welcomed death. But Elijah Muhammad taught that life could be heaven. He taught that heaven was on earth; it was a mode of living now. Agieb Bilal expressed his own desire for longevity as a desire to have more time to do more good in the world.[392] Living long also meant living well.

Discipline

Additional practical consequences of fasting included increased morality and increased intelligence. Elijah Muhammad reasoned that correct eating rhythms helped fortify one's ability to resist destructive physical impulses: "FASTING takes away evil desires. Fasting takes from us filthy desires. Fasting takes from us the desire to do evil against self and our brothers and sisters."[393] Fasters were fortified to resist temptations; they were more moral.

These connections between moral behavior and alimentary abstemiousness were common tropes in the literature of scientific nutrition and domestic science, which enjoyed considerable social prestige in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[394] Laura Shapiro has argued that this connection between morality and alimentation facilitated the rapt attention cooking schools and their recipes received throughout the country. One Michigan clubwoman's fears encapsulated the popular belief

[392] Bilal, interview.
[393] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 2*, 49.
[394] Shapiro, *Perfection Salad*.

that "so many kitchens of the land are sowing seeds which the saloon and the brothel stand ready to cultivate."[395] A young person well nourished with culinary discipline would feel no desire to drink, smoke, or visit places that invited transgression, such as pool halls. While there is no historical evidence that Elijah Muhammad read this literature on scientific nutrition and domestic science, he did believe in a relationship between controlling one's appetite and one's behavior. He quoted from the Qur'an to support his belief that fasting would help his people to avoid sin:

> WE, THE RIGHTEOUS, must fast as long as we are present and among the unrighteous. . . . Let us take a look at the verse in the Holy Qur'an 2:183: "O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you, as it is prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard against evil." Here it tells us why fasting is prescribed for us. It guards us against doing evil.[396]

Fasting itself helped give African Americans new knowledge about who they were, thereby dispelling stereotypes of African Americans as dull witted. Elijah Muhammad taught that fasting made his people smarter, and so he admonished them, "I SAY AGAIN, our stomach is not the boss. The brain is the boss."[397] In other words, what they knew should take precedence over what they felt. Elijah Muhammad wrote: "FASTING DOES much for us. A three-day fast will tell the story—you feel better; your body begins to feel lighter and not weighty as it felt when it was filled with food; your thinking is clearer."[398] *Muhammad Speaks* testimonials further emphasized this benefit, such as when Bayyinah Sharrieff reported that once she learned to fast she was able to

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[395] Ibid., 121.
[396] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 2*., 48.
[397] Ibid., 24.
[398] Ibid., 46.

"comprehend things very quickly."[399] Fasting did not make you better via the logic of asceticism—by prioritizing spirit over body. It made you better in your body. The process really was not about spirit transcending body, because bodies and life were positive. Muhammad did not even want fasting to be uncomfortable. He taught members how to incorporate it into their lives gradually to minimize the strain of acclimating to new eating rhythms. Instead of providing a means to transcend the world, fasting made followers more comfortable and agile in the world.

This very mode of discourse around fasting emphasized the intelligence and rationality of the modern heirs of Shabazz. For example, in *Muhammad Speaks*, Samuel 25X promised longevity from eating once a day by appealing to a study titled "Effect of Restricted Feeding upon Aging and Chronic Diseases in Rats and Dogs."[400] The rats and dogs lived longer by eating less. While there is a certain irony in making observations about beasts to justify the physiological superiority of abstinent Nation Muslims, the Nation used images of science and rationality to shore up the connection between Muhammad's fasting beliefs and both the longevity and scientific thinking of their forbears.

Conclusion

When considering themselves God's chosen people, both Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims participated in a tradition older than Governor Winthrop's speech on the *Arabella*. Each group filled the mandates of being chosen through fasting, while fasting

[399] Curtis, *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam, 1960–1975*, 108.
[400] Ibid., 99.

also helped them to realize specific benefits that God's chosen people could receive. But they did so long after white Protestants and most other Americans had ceased to fast. They had internalized American sensibilities that they found in fasting (assimilation), and they were superior to other Americans who no longer fasted (separation). Latter-day Saints fasted to meet their obligation, inherited from the Israelites, of caring for the poor. Through fasting, they were also able to access God's power, find answers to questions, resist temptation, and receive outpourings of God's spirit. Nation Muslims ate at the right times to regain the status their Shabazzian ancestors had enjoyed as God's chosen people. Elijah Muhammad taught that eating as God's chosen would demonstrate to them and others a capacity for physical control. Fasting produced the qualities of their ancestors and an increased sense of shared identity with those ancestors. Each person who skipped a meal enacted the truth that she was not a Negro but an Asiatic black person.

Chapter 5: Bad to Eat

Studies of religious food habits often focus on prohibitions. I have left this topic for the end of the dissertation to emphasize all of the theological analysis and cultural negotiation inherent in other, equally important aspects of religious foodways, including such often-overlooked points of analysis as favorite recipes (chapter 1). Focusing solely on prohibitions can blind us to the many other priorities and values at play in food habits, including self-sufficiency (chapter 2) and refinement (chapter 4).

Scholarly discussions of food prohibitions have been theoretically problematic for two main reasons. The first is that they have frequently been conceived in terms of the boundary maintenance of ancient peoples. This is only one way to investigate them, however, and it fails accurately to account for what is at play for twentieth-century American religious groups. Second, food prohibitions have been discussed in terms that largely omit or dismiss the ways believers themselves talk about their food prohibitions. This creates a dynamic in which scholars presume to define why believers avoid what they do.

In this chapter, I examine members' own descriptions of the reasons for their prohibitions. Taking seriously participants' accounts of their food prohibitions directs our attention away from old conceptions of boundary maintenance, which do not accurately portray the role of food prohibitions for these two outsider religious groups. Had boundary maintenance been the major purpose of these food prohibitions, Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims would likely have used them to make themselves more

distinct than they did. Although prohibitions did place some barriers between Nation Muslims, Latter-day Saints, and other Americans, the ways members and leaders approached the prohibitions minimized their separatist tendencies. Most believers emphasized prohibitions as God's nutrition science, which enabled good health.

Food Prohibitions in the LDS Church and the Nation of Islam

Before developing this argument about boundary maintenance, we must first review the food prohibitions for both groups, prohibitions that sprang from concerns for physical and spiritual health. Health informed cooking because it influenced which ingredients ended up on observant members' stoves. Prohibitions did keep certain ingredients out of the pot, especially pork for Nation Muslims and alcohol for members of both groups. But prohibitions had particular relevance for salvation. In neither tradition was salvation solely, or even primarily, a matter of spirit. Both traditions rejected a body/spirit dichotomy and argued that it was through the body that members came into their full human potential.

For Latter-day Saints, possession of a body made it possible to move forward, to develop; since even God himself had a physical body, a body was an essential vehicle for human beings to become more like Him. In order for Latter-day Saints to reach the highest levels of the Celestial Kingdom, they needed to first pass through all the trials of human life, which would be impossible without physical form.

While Latter-day Saints elevated the physical body by tying it with eternity, the Nation of Islam elevated the physical body by connecting it solely with this life. Elijah Muhammad encouraged followers to reject a "pie in the sky" mentality; this life, he

argued, was the only one, so followers should make it last as long as they could. He used the language of heaven and hell, because it spoke to concepts that people knew, but he redefined heaven and hell as something experienced during this life: "This is what man has sought: the heaven within and the heaven without. If heaven does not begin within, we will never enjoy it on the outside. We do not go to a certain place for heaven. Nearly all of my followers and I are already in heaven (a peace of mind and contentment for the necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, and without the enemy of fear and grief)."[401]

In both groups, prohibitions were not a means to punish or divorce oneself from the body, but a way to train and improve it, to teach it its proper place in the broader scheme. Although physical bodies were important to salvation in both groups, the time it took to thoroughly define prohibitions and prompt broad compliance for each was different.

Words of Wisdom for the Latter-day Saints

In section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Word of Wisdom promises:

> And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones . . . And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint. And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them. (D&C 89:18–22)

That leaders and members alike spoke of section 89 first in terms of health is no surprise; health, physical strength, and longevity were explicitly promised in the scripture itself.

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[401] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 1*, 58.

Other than the law of chastity, this was one of the few guidelines relating directly to the physical body in a tradition where possession of a physical body was the essential component of spiritual progression and salvation. Latter-day Saints were not the only people to teach "my body is a temple," but among them it was certainly a popular refrain. However, compliance with the Word of Wisdom did not come quickly.

Lizzie Belle Gardner Fillmore (1876–1961) drank black tea every morning of her life. And when she prayed to bless her food, she covered her teacup with her hand.[402] "I have to do this so the Lord won't see what's in my cup," she would say. Then she would laugh. Lizzie Belle was a practicing Latter-day Saint, the granddaughter of early apostle and martyr Parley P. Pratt. The God she prayed to was omniscient and omnipotent; she knew God could see the tea beneath her hand. But she covered that beverage nonetheless as an acknowledgment that she knew tea was against the rules. The God she worshipped was also all-loving, and that's why she continued to pray, every day, over the meal but not the tea.

Lizzie Belle's life spanned a key era of development in Word of Wisdom observance. The Word of Wisdom was born in 1833, three years after Joseph Smith organized The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but reaching consensus about a minimum standard of how to obey it, and what the penalty for noncompliance would be, took a hundred years. Thus, following the Word of Wisdom looked very different in the nineteenth century than it did in the middle of the twentieth. For example, where the text of Doctrine and Covenants 89 says, in verse 7, "And, again, strong drinks are not for

[402] Kathleen S. Holbrook, telephone interview by Kate Holbrook, October 6, 2011. Judith Pobanz, telephone interview by Kate Holbrook, October 6, 2011.

the belly, but for the washing of your bodies," later twentieth-century Saints thought only of abstaining from drinking alcohol. But early members of the Church observed this injunction by washing their bodies with cinnamon-infused whiskey as a ritual preparation for holy gatherings and ceremonies.[403] Similarly, verse 5 instructs, "Inasmuch as any man drinketh wine or strong drink among you, behold it is not good, neither meet in the sight of your Father, only in assembling yourselves together to offer up your sacraments before him." This verse reflects early Latter-day Saints' use of wine to recall Christ's blood during the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Since the early twentieth century, however, Saints have used only water.

Early Church leaders encouraged members to follow the Word of Wisdom, but doing so was not strictly a commandment, and how to do so was not clearly defined. The text itself says it was "to be sent greeting; not by commandment or constraint, but by revelation and the word of wisdom, showing forth the order and will of God in the temporal salvation of all saints in the last days."[404] For many, living the Word of Wisdom was a process; President Brigham Young himself did not give up tobacco until 1860.[405] Paul Peterson has shown that in 1883–1884 the members of the Quorum of the Twelve renewed their commitment to following the Word of Wisdom, simultaneously admitting they had neglected it.[406] As President of the Twelve, Wilford Woodruff stated, "We have come to the conclusion that we will more fully observe the word of wisdom, as we have

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[403] Leonard J. Arrington, ed., "Oliver Cowdery's Kirtland, Ohio, 'Sketchbook,'" *BYU Studies* 12, no. 4 (Summer 1972): 416.
[404] D&C 89:2
[405] Harper, *The Word of Wisdom*, 58.
[406] Peterson, "An Historical Analysis of the Word of Wisdom," 71.

all more or less been negligent upon that point."[407] On November 24, 1886, John D. T. McAllister and David H. Cannon from the St. George Temple wrote to President John Taylor saying they understood from the teachings of the apostles that those who do not "fully keep" the Word of Wisdom should not participate in temple ordinances. They wondered "how far we are expected by the Lord, and those who preside over us, to judge in this matter. We find that people come here, with their recommends duly signed, who bear the evidence with them that they do not observe the Word of Wisdom, so far as Tobacco is concerned; and we have good reason to state that others come here who habitually use tea or coffee, or both."[408] Several decades would pass before Word of Wisdom adherence was uniformly required for temple attendance.[409]

In these early years, self-sufficiency concerns trumped Word of Wisdom observance. Leaders tacitly allowed prohibited substances by encouraging their local production. Although leaders encouraged members to obey the Word of Wisdom, many members simply would not comply, and since money was hemorrhaging from the community every time members purchased these commodities from outsiders, leaders told them to produce their own. As Robert McCue has noted, "Over a five-year period beginning in 1861, many statements were made by Young, Wells, Kimball and especially Apostle George A. Smith, encouraging local production of tea, coffee, tobacco and

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[407] Minutes of the Salt Lake School of the Prophets, September 28, 1883, Vault Corporate Records, Church History Library.
[408] John D. T. McAllister and David H. Cannon, Letterpress Copybook, 1881–1887, November 24, 1886, Church History Library.
[409] Alexander, "The Word of Wisdom: From Principle to Requirement," 82. See also Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 258–71.

alcoholic beverages for the Latter-day Saint market in order to save the money that was being sent out of the territory to purchase these items."[410]

From the very beginning in Kirtland, Ohio, members understood that hot drinks referred to coffee and tea, and strong drinks to alcoholic beverages. Therefore, from the time of the revelation members understood prohibitions to include coffee, tea, alcohol and tobacco.[411] What was not clear from the beginning was whether one was required to abstain absolutely from those substances or whether the revelation only called for moderation. Joseph Smith refused to require complete abstinence from members, and Brigham Young followed suit, railing against drunkenness but not prohibiting alcohol altogether. Young spoke against coffee, tea, and tobacco, but he did not forbid them.[412] There was some difference of opinion on the question of meat, however. Lorenzo Snow, who was president of the Church from 1898 to 1901, felt strongly that members should not eat meat.[413] According to the Doctrine and Covenants text itself, adherents should eat many fruits and vegetables in season, and lots of grain. But individual members did so uncommonly and only according to their own discretion.

Legislating compliance with the Word of Wisdom was therefore a process—one heavily influenced by Heber J. Grant (1918–1945). In 1902, President Joseph F. Smith told stake presidents to refuse temple recommends to "flagrant" violators of the Word of

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[410] Robert J. McCue, "Did the Word of Wisdom Become a Commandment in 1851?", *Dialogue* 14, no. 3 (Autumn 1981): 70.
[411] Peterson, "An Historical Analysis of the Word of Wisdom," 23–24, 36; Paul Hoskisson, "Different and Unique: The Word of Wisdom in the Historical, Cultural, and Social Setting of the 1830s," *Mormon Historical Studies* 10:2 (Fall 2009): 46–47; Hoskisson, "The Word of Wisdom in its First Decade," *Journal of Mormon History* 38:1 (Winter 2012): 151.
[412] Paul H. Peterson and Ronald W. Walker, "Brigham Young's Word of Wisdom Legacy," *BYU Studies* 42, nos. 3 & 4 (2003): 33–35.
[413] Alexander, "The Word of Wisdom: From Principle to Requirement," 78.

Wisdom but to exercise leniency with elderly people who used tobacco or drank tea.[414] In 1906, the Quorum of the Twelve began to use water instead of wine as a sacrament in its members' temple meetings. Under Heber J. Grant's presidency in 1921, obedience to the Word of Wisdom was again declared a requirement for admission to the temple. But not until 1933, when the revelation was one hundred years old, did the *General Handbook of Instructions* explicitly state that those desiring temple recommends must keep the Word of Wisdom.[415] This increased strictness likely related to the fact that Prohibition was repealed in 1933.[416] With the government no longer actively prohibiting alcohol, the Church had a decision to make, and instead of easing away from abstinence with the rest of the country, they increased their devotion to it. Their understanding of the importance of abstinence may have been deeply informed by temperance movement rhetoric, which may be seen as a move toward assimilation, but their decision to stick with abstinence after Prohibition was separatist.

Lizzie Belle's grandchildren watched her cover her teacup when they were children during the 1940s and 1950s. Because Word of Wisdom adherence was linked by then with temple worthiness, her grandchildren's reminiscence about the tea was quickly followed by reassurance about how assiduously she kept her temple covenants.[417] When

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[414] To reach the highest levels of salvation after death, members of the Church must make specific covenants with God in an LDS Temple. Church members who live far from a temple might save money for years to visit the temple just once. Church employees throughout the world must be worthy of a temple recommend, from the gardeners at Temple Square in Salt Lake City to the faculty at BYU–Hawaii to Church administrators in Mexico City.

[415] Alexander, "The Word of Wisdom: From Principle to Requirement," 82. See also Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 258–71.

[416] James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-Day Saints*, 2nd edition (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 525.

[417] Anecdotal evidence abounds about faithful Church members who drank coffee or iced tea. An October 3, 1942, message from the First Presidency, read over the pulpit at general conference, suggests leaders

Lizzie Belle was born on August 21, 1878, in Richfield, Utah (a year after Brigham Young's death), many members of the Church still considered aspects of the Word of Wisdom to be optional. But by the time of her death in April 1961, keeping the Word of Wisdom was understood to be an important component of Latter-day Saint life.

History of Nation Prohibitions

As with the Latter-day Saints, food prohibitions for the Nation also developed gradually. Elijah Muhammad taught W. D. Fard's food guidelines for decades before finally publishing the first volume of *How to Eat to Live* in 1967. In *How to Eat to Live*, Muhammad clarified the precise details of Nation food prohibitions that he had disseminated over time and in different venues as the organization developed. According to Agieb Bilal, early Nation Muslims primarily conceived of prohibitions in terms of avoiding pork and alcohol and eating simple food in its natural forms, without preservatives or elaborate preparations. As an early part of their reverse discrimination, members eschewed white foods, including white sugar, white flour, and white rice.[418] Nation Muslims learned how to read labels, making sure packaged contents contained no pork or other detrimental ingredients. They also frequently referred to a book by Jethro

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were concerned over a diminishing, but still persistent, lack of compliance. "For more than half a century President Grant has on every appropriate occasion admonished the Saints touching their obligation to keep the Word of Wisdom. . . . But his admonitions have not found a resting place in all our hearts. We, the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, now solemnly renew all these counsels, we repeat all these admonitions, we reinvoke obedience to God's law of health given us by God Himself. . . . We urge the Saints to quit trifling with this law and so to live it that we may claim its promises." James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1833–1964* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1975), 6:172–73.

[418] Bilal, interview.

Kloss, a Seventh-day Adventist pastor and avid food reformer[419] whose 1939 health manual *Back to Eden* emphasized using wholesome food and herbs. Bilal remembers when in the early 1960s the Nation bought thousands of copies and sold them door-to-door along with its newspapers. Sonsyrea Tate said her mother loved the book and continued to use it when she left the Nation after Elijah Muhammad's death.[420] Articles entitled "How to Eat to Live" in *Muhammad Speaks* and books by the same name replaced *Back to Eden* as Nation Muslims' main references about food prohibitions. In those pages Muhammad clarified the rules about which chickens were appropriate to eat, which parts of cauliflower could be eaten, and other similarly specific dos and don'ts.

Food prohibitions reflected the guidelines of orthodox Islam but were more elaborate and more specific to the mythos of the Nation. For example, as with Muslim *halal*, Nation Muslims were to avoid pork and alcohol. But the ideal was to limit one's intake of any meat. Tobacco and drugs were forbidden in addition to alcohol because Elijah Muhammad said that these items had been used by whites to hamper both slaves and free blacks; they functioned, in other words, as a means of enslavement and a vehicle for oppression. We saw in the last chapter that whereas fasting for Muslims took place for one month a year during Ramadan, Nation disciples were to eat only one meal per day, or every other day, year-round. Unlike *halal*, Nation food prohibitions included peas, many types of dried beans, collard greens, and sweet potatoes because they were considered bad for health.

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[419] Jethro Kloss, *Back to Eden: A Human Interest Story of Health and Restoration to Be Found in Herb, Root, and Bark* (Coalmont, Tenn.: Longview Publishing House, 1939).
[420] Montgomery, interview.

Elijah Muhammad described the prohibitions in numerous ways throughout his books, but the following is a relatively comprehensive summary of his approach to vegetables:

> The roots of turnips do very well, but not the salad. Cabbages are good, especially the white head, but not the green leaves. Cauliflower is a really fine vegetable, but take away the green leaves. . . . Do not eat the vegetable called kale. Eat some spinach, but do not become an habitual spinach eater. Eat rutabaga—a little every now and then. You may eat as much garlic and onion as you like, but no sweet potatoes and no white potatoes. Sweet potatoes were never good for any human to eat. They are good for hogs, but not for you.[421]

Aside from spinach in moderate amounts, leafy greens were suspect for causing gastrointestinal discomfort. Here we see that prohibitions were no longer based primarily on reverse discrimination, or else Muhammad likely would have instructed followers to eat the green leaves of the cauliflower and leave the white head alone. The prohibitions may be disorienting in light of today's understanding of nutrition science, but they did echo some wisdom from the early middle of the twentieth century. For example, the prophet warned against quick breads such as corn bread, hot cakes, and biscuits, which now seems odd.[422] But Leah Widtsoe also cautioned against them, based on her study of nutrition science: "Yeast is by far the best leavening agent, and therefore all quick breads should be used only in an emergency—the less the better."[423] (Baking soda and baking powder are the leavening agents for quick breads.) Quick breads were also a problem because they were often undercooked, which hindered thorough mastication.

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[421] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 1*, 4; see also pp. 10, 108.
[422] Ibid., 6.
[423] Widtsoe, *How to Be Well: A Health Handbook and Cook-Book Based on the Newer Knowledge of Nutrition*, 158.

Additionally, people tended to eat them with butter and honey or syrups or jam, which in combination, she believed, strained the digestive organs. Widtsoe also quoted Mary Swartz Rose's caution about hot breads because, "The temptation to use them to excess is difficult to control, and the appetite for more wholesome food is vitiated."[424]

Lana Shabazz, who reported cooking for three years for Elijah Muhammad and an undisclosed amount of time for Malcolm X, summarized the prohibitions relatively simply: "We don't eat sweet potatoes. . . . We eat very little rice or potatoes, no white bread—only whole wheat that I bake myself. We don't eat anything gaseous like kale, collards or turnip greens and we eat only a little spinach and cabbage, but with none of the tough, dark green outer leaves." Shabazz's summary reflects the way everyday cooks made sense of their food prohibitions, and provides an additional clue about why Nation Muslims avoided leafy greens: flatulence.[425] Because some cultures celebrated the expulsion of gas as complementary to a host, it is worth mentioning here that Nation Muslims sought to avoid gas and the negative social connotation Americans attributed to it; refined citizens in this country never publicly expelled gas.

Muhammad frequently appealed to members to conduct themselves graciously. Most often, he did so by condemning the behavior and appearance of certain animals, particularly pigs. But prohibitions also kept the deportment of Nation Muslims distinct from animal behavior because they did not consume food that God intended for those animals. Nuts, for example, would not make people behave like animals but were bad for

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[424] Ibid., 159.
[425] Sheraton, "Lana Shabazz Has Cooked For Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X and Now It's Ali," 16c. See for example: "Sweet potatoes are full of gas; do not eat them." Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 1*, 4.

health because only animals could digest them properly: "The only thing with stomach enough to digest nuts is an animal. Birds love nuts and they have what it takes to digest them."[426] This prohibition seems strange in the context of a people reading *Back to Eden,* which celebrated natural, whole foods unadulterated by human tampering. But Muhammad framed the relationship between nature and nuts as one in which nature created and intended them for animals, not humans. So regardless of how "natural" nuts were, nature made them for animal, not human, consumption. In his references to nuts, Muhammad juxtaposed human to animal stomachs or spoke of human stomachs as too delicate to digest nuts. The term *nature* hearkened back to the state of the original man, of which white people were a perversion. Therefore, eating nuts that God created for animals was an additional perversion:

> All types of beans, peas, and nuts were not produced by nature for us to try to use as a diet for our delicate stomachs to digest—not to mention the pig. The enemy of the righteous has gone to the extreme in everything to shorten, waste, and change the way of right. In trying to make a different world and people from the right world of the original people (black people), he made a hell for us all.[427]

The right people populating the right world did not eat this wrong food. Muhammad's concerns about nuts echoed his reasons for eating once a day: to not wear out the stomach. Nuts would overtax and wear out members' stomachs. His exhortations also further differentiated Nation Muslims from animals. Animals had the tough organs that could handle digesting course nuts, while humans and their organs were more refined, "delicate." People who respected the limitations of their delicate constitutions, Nation

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[426] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 1*, 39.
[427] Ibid., 118–19.

Muslims, were that much further removed from the bestial animal realm. Nuts were not the only food Muhammad explained as belonging to the animal kingdom, however. He also wrote, "Allah forbids us to eat peas. He considers most peas fit for cattle and herds of animals, but not for the delicate stomachs of human beings."[428]

Most of the time, there was no serious punishment when members failed to observe prohibitions. Agieb Bilal recalled that some members chose disaffiliation because they did not want to observe the prohibitions. One man quit because he wanted to eat nuts; others wanted pork.[429] In an e-mail, former Nation Muslim Mario Ahmad expressed his understanding that dietary choices originated with the individual and were meant to uplift members, not to function as an excuse for penalization: “The diet was part of the NOI self-esteem program. . . . Dietary discipline wasn't something imposed. It distinguished and separated NOI members from the ‘so-called Negro.’" Ahmad did not recall any punishments for dietary trespasses, although he remembered that offenses such as smoking or drinking alcohol earned a “Class C” offense.[430] Members made amends for Class C sentences by performing labor at the temple or elsewhere. Technically, eating pork could also receive a Class C sentence. The Fruit of Islam oversaw trials at the temples. “Common violations seen at trials during the time of Muhammad include adultery, use of narcotics, misuse of temple funds, not attending meetings, sleeping during meetings, failing to bring ‘Lost-Founds’ (visitors) to meetings, reporting temple activities to outsiders, using unbecoming language before female Muslims, eating or

[428] Ibid., 4. On bananas for monkeys, not humans, see Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 2*, 81.
[429] Bilal, interview.
[430] Ahmad, e-mail message.

selling pork, failing to pay extra dues for being overweight, allowing anyone to enter the temple under the influence of liquor, or stating an unwillingness to die for Allah."[431]

A New Look at Old Habits:

Complicating the Boundary Maintenance Narrative

Believers' minds made sense of prohibitions in myriad ways. Scholars who examine food prohibitions have tended to analyze ancient rather than modern peoples, and they have concluded that prohibitions were primarily about identity and boundary maintenance. For example, Jean Soler, who wrote extensively about monotheism, the Bible, and food, argued that the Hebrew Bible's injunctions about eating meat defined distinctions not only between God's chosen people and other peoples, but also between God and the human race. Referring to postdiluvian injunctions against eating flesh tainted by blood, he explained, "Blood becomes the signifier of the vital principle, so that it becomes possible to maintain the distance between man and God by expressing it in a different way with respect to food. . . . Once the blood (which is God's) is set apart, meat becomes desacralized—and permissible."[432] In other words, God's people had to maintain the distinction between themselves and God by properly butchering and consuming animals. The obedient honored God and his infinite superiority by not eating meat that had been tainted by blood during the preparation process. Prohibitions were mainly symbolic, marking the definitions that maintained God's honor.

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[431] Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*, 224, quoted in David Friedman, "The Nation of Islam," accessed February 15, 2014, http://www.daviddfriedman.com/Academic/Course_Pages/Legal_Systems_Very_Different_13/papers_05/Nation_of_Islam.htm.

[432] Jean Soler, "The Semiotics of Food in the Bible," in *Food and Drink in History,* 128.

Mary Douglas, the grande dame of scholarship on food prohibitions, also focused on prohibitions' symbolic power. In her revised assessment of prohibitions, "Deciphering a Meal," where she responded to critics of her earlier and most famous work, *Purity and Danger,* she argued, "The sanctity of cognitive boundaries is made known by valuing the integrity of the physical forms."[433] Douglas's understanding of the connection between cognitive boundaries and physical forms led her to conclude that some foods were prohibited in order to establish distinctions between Israel and other peoples; as she put it, "Israel is the boundary that all the other boundaries celebrate."[434] The symbolic power of pork works for multiple reasons: because it defies the classification of undulates, because pigs eat carrion, and because they are reared as food by non-Israelites. ("An Israelite who betrothed a foreigner might have been liable to be offered a feast of pork."[435])

While the relationship between food prohibitions and boundary maintenance seems apt for an ancient people concerned about the theological error that would enter a community through intermarriage, this framing is less useful in analyzing Nation and LDS food prohibitions. In part this is because both groups welcomed new members. The Nation neither sought nor wanted white membership, but they did welcome members of any other race to join them; Latter-day Saints proselytized to as many nations as they could, although male members of African descent were not able to have the priesthood until 1978. Thus both groups desired boundaries with some fluidity. More important,

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[433] Douglas, "Deciphering a Meal."
[434] Ibid.
[435] Ibid.

however, is the fact that food prohibitions only somewhat fortified the distinction between believers and outsiders because practices between believers and nonbelievers sometimes overlapped. For example, "secular" vegetarians eschewed pork and many Protestants shunned alcoholic beverages.

I do not mean to suggest that Mary Douglas was wrong. Rather, boundary maintenance for the peoples she studied was different, and more possible, than boundary maintenance for twentieth-century Americans, and boundary maintenance was only a part, and often the lesser part, of the role food prohibitions played in the lives of Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims. Certainly food prohibitions did distance Nation Muslims and Latter-day Saints from those outside of their traditions. This separation, however, was more superable than we might think. For example, if a Protestant wished to invite an Orthodox Jewish person to her home for dinner, she would need to burn all food traces from the inside of her oven, making it like new; buy a new set of dishes for serving; and be careful to serve only kosher food. This would make such a dinner invitation a daunting prospect for the hostess. On the other hand, if the same hostess wanted to entertain Malcolm and Betty Shabazz, she had to pay careful attention to the menu, but did not need to worry about the oven, pots and pans, or dinnerware. And simply omitting coffee, tea, and alcohol from the menu would make most LDS guests comfortable.

The difference between the function of food prohibitions in ancient Israel and those of Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims in the twentieth century is also due to more frequent interactions between peoples. In both modern groups, believers from neophytes to seasoned members continued to interact with associates from outside their

traditions. Prohibitions often fostered tension in these gatherings, but they did not keep people apart. For example, Christmas could be fraught for Nation Muslims whose families were not members. Despite the fact that Nation Muslims officially did not celebrate Christmas, many often spent the day with their families. When they ate and what they did not eat provided the most tension during their visits home. Family members enjoyed festive food throughout the day while Nation Muslims had to refrain until dinner. Then, when finally they could eat with the others, they could not partake of the Christmas ham or anything else with pork. According to Bilal, when enough time had passed, families of converts usually came to see their loved ones' new faith was not a whim; some even saw benefits in the discipline and refinement that came with it. "Once family members saw you were serious, they saw the qualitative changes in your life, they accepted you," Bilal said. But before then, a relative's rejection of such a central part of the holiday celebration—the food!—could irritate family members.

Instead of an insuperable boundary, prohibitions signified members' commitment to a distinctive community. Nation Muslims were different from African Americans who ate traditional southern food or any food that recalled a slave diet. Latter-day Saints were different from Christians who drank wine, coffee, or tea. Because of these prohibitions, some Nation Muslims found themselves drifting away from old acquaintances as the time they previously spent drinking became time to attend FOI or MGT meetings, where teachers emphasized the dangers of alcohol. Latter-day Saints attending professional meetings may have found themselves the odd people out as their colleagues moved to the hotel bar to pass the evening or at dinner as they refused several beverages. LDS leaders

felt it necessary to dissuade members from caving to social pressure, however, emphasizing instead the pride they could take in their commitments. John Vandenberg, who was Presiding Bishop for the Church from 1961 to 1972,[436] wrote to a young audience:

> Let us not be ashamed of the gospel. I want to say that you never have to apologize in business or in industry for what the standards of the Church are. I know. I have been through it. I spent twenty years in the livestock business, and there were national conventions, business conventions, and local conventions where the first item of business was the cocktail hour, designated on the schedule as the "reception" or the "social hour." These conventions were held in hotels or public meeting places, and there was a great deal of pressure to participate in the social drinking. But you do not need to participate; and I testify that when you withstand these pressures, people admire you for having the strength to live up to your principles . . . . And people will tell you as they told me, "I respect you for it, and I wish I could do the same."[437]

Vandenberg entreated young readers to stay committed not by avoiding people who were outside their faith community but by feeling proud of Church standards, which he discussed in terms of the Word of Wisdom.

In midcentury Mormonism, as more and more Latter-day Saints took up residence in non-Mormon areas as the "Mormon diaspora" spread, there was even outreach in the form of talks and magazine articles to help members navigate complex social encounters over food. When Robert Wells became a full-time Church leader (a member of the Quorum of the Seventy), he wrote an *Ensign* article detailing his past professional experience on how to observe Word of Wisdom prohibitions in diverse company without alienating others. He provided an example, meant to guide the behavior of his readers, of

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[436] "New General Authorities Sustained at Conference," *Ensign*, July 1972.
[437] John H. Vandenberg, "Elijah, The Red Sea, and You," *New Era*, July 1971, 5.

how Saints could prevent prohibitions from cutting them off entirely from other people. At the beginning of an evening, for example, he would find the head waiter and ask for a glass of juice instead of champagne, informing him where he would stand, so that he could participate in a toast without holding up the proceedings at a crucial moment. One time when he had to perform the toast himself, he did so with water and humorously celebrated the local community's proud accomplishment of providing potable municipal water for their populace: "At the appropriate time, I lifted my champagne glass full of water and announced to the assembled important people, 'I don't know what you have in your glasses, but in mine I have the purest of liquids—water from the municipal water system of Asuncion.' . . .The compliment was sincere, and it worked very well. They laughed, and no one ever forgot that 'Mormon Toast.'"[438] Many people sought to cultivate relationships outside of their religious communities, to maintain family ties, to proselytize, to make a good impression, and to avoid giving offense.

The explanations that scholars provide to account for food prohibitions and the explanations members use to understand them differ. In both the Nation and the LDS Church, members and leaders alike knew their food prohibitions set them apart from people with whom they otherwise would have enjoyed frequent social intercourse. But they did not cite that setting apart as the reason for their prohibitions. Instead, they spoke of health as the primary benefit of their abstinence, and health was a value they shared with people outside of their faith communities. In general, Nation Muslims or Latter-day

[438] Robert E. Wells, "Observing the Word of Wisdom—Politely," *Ensign*, August 1983, 22. Robert Wells is the father of Sharlene Wells, the first LDS Miss America (1985). Wells apparently learned well her father's lessons on getting along well in broader society. Ray Boren, "Sharlene Wells Hawkes: A Woman for All Seasons," *Deseret News*, January 3, 1999, http://www.deseretnews.com/article/676530/Sharlene-Wells-Hawkes----A-woman-for-all-seasons.html?pg=all.

Saints would not explain their health code as a defense against outsiders or a reinforcement of group identity, although they may have acknowledged these as consequences. Most believers instead emphasized prohibitions as God's nutrition science, which enabled good health. As scholars identify reasons for food prohibitions that differ from members' own descriptions, we should also attend to the reasons members themselves identify. We will gain understanding there, too.

Latter-day Saints and Nutrition Science

Latter-day Saints who tied Word of Wisdom prohibitions in with health and science made the prohibitions function in a way that was more assimilationist than separatist because health concerns trumped prohibition requirements. So, for example, when LDS mother "Julia" experienced worrying premature labor pains in the early 1970s, her doctor suggested that she drink alcohol to stop the labor pains. Julia reported that at six months gestation during her third pregnancy in 1973, she was entering labor with contractions every three minutes. When she finally went to her doctor, he put her on what she recalls as an alcohol-based IV. Within an hour the labor pains stopped. She reported,

> The doctor was not only a dear friend but a member of a stake presidency.[439] He advised us that if it happened again, [my husband] should buy some vodka and make me a screwdriver which would relax my body and hopefully the pains would subside. He explained that he could put me on a medication which may have disturbing side effects so if the vodka worked, go with it. It worked. About every two weeks, the labor started again and after about an hour of regular contractions three minutes apart, [my husband] dutifully fixed me a drink and in a short time the

[439] A stake is something like a diocese, so a member of a stake presidency would have a similar role to special counsel to an archbishop.

> pains went away. Because the drink was so disgusting (tasted like pure rubbing alcohol disguised in orange juice), I did try the medication at one point in one of the pregnancies. It made my heart race, I felt lightheaded and as though I was going to faint! I decided to hold my nose and stick with the drink right up to the end of my ninth pregnancy. . . .We were grateful for this solution to the dangers of having a premature baby![440]

Even as late as the 1980s, cultural attitudes toward the Word of Wisdom allowed for some prohibited substances to be taken for illness. For some maladies, people believed tea to be a useful remedy, although they would not drink it regularly and believed it to be habit forming. Thus, Lizzie Belle's daughter and namesake, who also enjoyed tea, only drank it on mornings when she felt ill. "I could always tell what kind of night mom had if I saw her tea cup in the sink," reported her daughter, meaning if she had not felt well she drank tea.[441]

Latter-day Saints had to bear neither the physical discomfort nor the social opprobrium of ignoring a doctor's orders. The family doctor could be the arbiter of what was good for health, and therefore not a Word of Wisdom violation, but patients did experience extra comfort in tampering with those regulations when the doctor also held a respectable Church position, as did Julia's physician. Regardless, however, doctors' orders always provided grounds for partaking of an otherwise prohibited substance. Members drinking tea or alcohol to follow specific medical prescription stayed fully compliant with the Word of Wisdom.

Latter-day Saints invoked science and health in their discussions of Word of Wisdom prohibitions to the extent that these qualities seemed reasonable in comparison

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[440] My correspondent asked to remain anonymous in her response to my e-mail message with the subject heading, "Pregnancy and Alcohol," January 27, 2014.
[441] Holbrook, interview.

with mainstream trends. But when a focus on health threatened to inculcate strange habits—habits that would further separate members from mainstream American culture—most members refrained. As we saw in chapter 1, the work of Leah and John Widtsoe clearly illustrates this process. When the Widtsoes invoked science to strengthen LDS claims about Joseph Smith as a prophet, other members happily repeated the refrain. But when Leah Widtsoe's scientific approach to nutrition led her to recommend radical dietary changes such as relinquishing chocolate and many desserts, most people did not follow suit. In fact, when John took his grandchildren out for ice cream, Leah stayed in the car.[442]

In their book, originally published in 1937 and used as the priesthood manual of study throughout the Church in 1938, the Widtsoes interpreted the compatibility of cutting-edge nutrition science with the Word of Wisdom as evidence that Joseph Smith was God's prophet:

> Throughout these pages fact has crowded upon fact in support of the declaration of Joseph Smith, the Prophet, that the Word of Wisdom was revealed to him from heavenly sources. He would have stood helpless before the problem of human health had he relied on current knowledge or upon his own shrewd guesses. There are statements in the revelation that, in the light of modern knowledge, cannot be explained by any other means than that of inspiration. Indeed, today, after 104 years the Word of Wisdom stands as one of the most convincing evidences of the divine inspiration of Joseph Smith, the "Mormon" Prophet.[443]

The Widtsoes' study of nutrition confirmed that Word of Wisdom encouragement to limit meat intake, eat plenty of vegetables and grains, and avoid hard alcohol and

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[442] George Durham, e-mail message to Kate Holbrook, February 19, 2014.
[443] John A. Widtsoe and Leah D. Widtsoe, *The Word of Wisdom: A Modern Interpretation* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1937), 249–50.

tobacco (except when using it to make a poultice) was indeed best for human health. In their view, nutrition science had not yet defined these principles when Smith published the Word of Wisdom in 1833, so he could only have identified them through revelation from God, who as an all-knowing Creator knew exactly what bodies needed to flourish.

Nevertheless, where science and Church teachings diverged, there was no question but to follow Church teachings. Science was mainly useful when it supported Church doctrine. Joseph Merrill, a man of science who was also a Church leader, delineated in a 1940 general conference talk the fallacy of relying too heavily on scientific explanations. His speech suggested that members often approached him with a desire to find more scientific evidence that could support Church doctrine, and this regard for science concerned him. He warned that members should not obey the Word of Wisdom because of scientific evidence but first and foremost because it was God's law. "Scientific confirmation of the Word of Wisdom has not kept our youth from experimenting with tobacco, marijuana, alcoholic beverages, or any other drug," he reasoned:

> There is a better reason why I should speak about the Word of Wisdom than because I am a scientist. I have been called as a General Authority and as such have been given a special stewardship to teach people the truth. As a General Authority I have a solid, personal witness that Jesus Christ is the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind. I know that he is the Creator and that he knows the end from the very beginning. As the Creator of man, he knows which things are good for our bodies and which things are injurious to us. Jesus Christ as the God of this world has told us that alcoholic beverages, tobacco, tea, and coffee are all destructive of our health. . . . Since I know that God lives and that these instructions come from him, I am in a better position as a servant of God to warn the people

> of the world and members of the Church in particular against such dangers than I would ever be as a scientist.[444]

Merrill spoke so strongly, and at length, about the supremacy of spiritual over scientific knowledge because he saw members during this time—quite soon after publication of the very scientific Widtsoe tome—too readily embracing the appealingly mainstream authority of science. Nevertheless, members and leaders repeated the refrain of science supporting the Word of Wisdom in official venues for decades to come. Church general authority Theodore Burton said in a 1976 general conference: "Although the evils connected with excessive use of alcohol had long been recognized, at that time [1830s] it was not known how pernicious the use of alcohol could be. The dangers involved in the use of tobacco, tea, coffee, and the excessive use of meat were just not known in those early days. But the Lord knew of these perils and warned his children in order to protect them both in body and in mind."[445] Lora Larson explained in a 1977 *Ensign* article, "The fact that the Word of Wisdom is a commandment is the reason we should obey it. However, it's exciting to learn how continuing scientific discoveries verify the *wisdom* of the commandment, a commandment given when knowledge of nutrition was practically nonexistent."[446] Finally, a scholar legendary in LDS circles taught, "From the beginning it becomes increasingly apparent that the Word of Wisdom is far more advanced than we have realized. Every time a new step is taken today we find that the Word of Wisdom anticipated it."[447] Members felt comfortable when the cloak of

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[444] Theodore M. Burton, "The Word of Wisdom," *Ensign*, May 1976, 29.
[445] Ibid., 28.
[446] Lora Beth Larson, "The Do's in the Word of Wisdom," *Ensign*, April 1977, 46.
[447] Hugh W. Nibley, "Word of Wisdom: Commentary on D&C 89" (presented at the Gospel Doctrine Class, Manavu Ward, December 1979), http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/transcripts/?id=118.

scientific authority, so well respected among Americans generally, could lend credence to the tenets of their own tradition.

Yet when a scientifically supported, demanding study of nutrition science and the Word of Wisdom encouraged deviation from American dietary habits, Latter-day Saints did not embrace it. Leah Widtsoe's experience showed the limits of members' devotion to the Word of Wisdom and health beyond the basic prohibition requirements of the temple recommend interview (tea, coffee, alcohol, and tobacco).[448] When her *How to Be Well* recommended against chocolate, cola drinks,[449] excessive meat eating, and many desserts, LDS palates would not comply. By the end of her life, this woman who was instrumental in founding the home economics program at BYU, who had served on its Board of Education and as Dean of Women, was not welcome to speak on campus. This was the university founded by and named for her grandfather, the second president of the Church—a man she adored and about whom she had coauthored a biography. Widtsoe learned of her diminished status when she attended a series of lectures on nutrition for the faculty (Widtsoe was not on the faculty, but attended the lectures). When she realized that no one would be speaking on the Word of Wisdom and that lectures were scheduled for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday, but none for Thursday, she offered to give a

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[448] McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 765.

[449] Widtsoe wrote, "The use of chocolate and cocoa is avoided in these menus. For, while it has been an accepted article of food in most families, yet its use is unhygienic, especially for children. . . . The use of cocoa may become as habit-forming as is tea and coffee and many a child has been allowed to form this unfortunate habit." In her recommended menus for Boy Scout outings, she warns, "The use of cola drinks on such outings cannot be too strongly condemned. It is a pernicious thing for them to take any drug laden food or drink, no matter how weak the drug content may be. Parents and scoutmasters should be on the lookout and prevent such insidious habit-forming practices." Finally, "The overuse of sugar and its products is a distinct menace to health." Widtsoe, *How to Be Well: A Health Handbook and Cook-Book Based on the Newer Knowledge of Nutrition*, 93–94, 519, 91.

free lecture in the Thursday spot and was refused.[450] Conventional LDS culture could not accommodate her stringent ideas about diet.

Bruce R. McConkie's volume *Mormon Doctrine,* which was widely viewed as authoritative but not officially endorsed by the Church, warned against dietary extremes. Widtsoe herself warned against fads and would not have included her ideas among them. But McConkie may have had her in mind when he wrote that "some unstable people become cranks with reference to this law of health. . . . There is no prohibition in Section 89, for instance, as to the eating of white bread, using white flour, white sugar, cocoa, chocolate, eggs, milk, meat, or anything else, except items classified under the headings, tea, coffee, tobacco, and liquor. As a matter of fact those who command that men should not eat meat, are not ordained of God."[451]

Vegetarianism Without the Bounds

LDS hesitancy about and general rejection of vegetarianism provides a final demonstration of Latter-day Saints not employing food prohibitions to alienate them from a broader national community. The Word of Wisdom text recommends limited meat intake (except "in time of winter"), and some leaders—including, as we have seen, Church president Lorenzo Snow—advocated vegetarianism as a result. Leah Widtsoe reported, "The most reliable nutritionists—McCollum of Johns Hopkins, Mottram of University of London, Sherman of Columbia, Mary Swartz Rose of Teachers College, Hindhede of Denmark, and many others of equal standing—are in general accord with

[450] Widtsoe, interview, 37–38.
[451] McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 765–66.

the statement that 'meat should be eaten sparingly.'"[452] But members would not give up their meat. LDS recipes for meat dishes abounded, which led *Deseret News* food editor Winifred Jardine to emphasize recipes in her cookbook that could be used in place of meat, including Quiche Lorraine, Top Hat Cheese Soufflé Breakfast Casserole and Cheese with Spinach Strada.[453] How to convince members to reduce their consumption of meat? Others wrestled with the disparity between LDS meat intake and Word of Wisdom guidance in the pages of the *Ensign.* Gaurth Hansen, a biochemist and former member of the Council on Food and Nutrition, dealt with the tension by justifying meat eating on nutritional grounds: "I think it would be difficult to have a properly balanced diet from fruits and vegetables alone. The main reason is that vegetable protein is of a lower quality than meat protein.[454] Often between one and three of the amino acids in good quality protein are not present in adequate quantity in vegetable protein. To me, this is a fad diet; but fruits and vegetables are a very important part of a balanced diet."[455] LDS authorities loved to decry fad diets. Larson also looked to scripture to denounce vegetarianism but did eventually admit, "Dried peas and beans such as pigeon peas, navy beans, and soybeans contain moderate to high quality protein as well as some iron, so these may be used as meat alternates."[456] Hansen's article helped to justify meat eating for the many Latter-day Saints who, like him, worried about being associated with culinary outliers like "faddists" or vegetarians. Justifications for eating meat were far more prominent than admonitions to restrain meat intake. This may have been because Latter-day Saints really

[452] Widtsoe, *How to Be Well*, 68.
[453] Jardine, *Mormon Country Cooking*, 65.
[454] Widtsoe cited studies thirty years earlier that contradict this point. Widtsoe, *How to Be Well*, 69.
[455] "A Conversation with Gaurth Hansen on Diet, Foods, and Nutrition," *New Era*, September 1972, 29.
[456] Larson, "The Do's in the Word of Wisdom," 48.

liked meat. It may also have been because they liked the status they attained by eating red meat, and they felt wary of practices that deviated from mainstream American norms.

Nation Muslims and Meat

Nation Muslims were also advised against eating much meat, and they also continued to consume it. Former Nation Muslim Mario Ahmad reports that "among the featured accomplishments of the Nation was its meat processing."[457] In 1995, cookbook author Reda Faard Khalifah lamented the high proportion of meat recipes in *The Muslim Recipe Book*, explaining that people were only now catching up to what Elijah Muhammad already knew: "that meat is one of the major causes of sickness and disease."[458] Muhammad's description of the dangers of meat echoed those of Adventist reformer John Harvey Kellogg, "who invented eating meatless dishes including cornflakes, [and] lectured in the 1870s on the theory of 'auto-intoxication,' that meat literally rots in the stomach and clogs the system, causing poisons to flood the body."[459] Muhammad used similar visceral imagery when referring to meat and digestion, as did his followers. Bilal recalls that before he joined the Nation, he finally gave up pork when he heard Muhammad Ali speak. Ali said if you put a slice of bacon in the window in the morning it would be on the other side of the frame by noon because of the maggots it contained. Bilal was never able to eat pork again after that speech.[460]

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[457] Mario A. S. Ahmad, e-mail message to Kate Holbrook, February 14, 2014.
[458] Khalifah, *The Muslim Recipe Book*, 6.
[459] Michael Owen Jones, "Food Choice, Symbolism, and Identity: Bread-and-Butter Issues for Folkloristics and Nutrition Studies (American Folklore Society Presidential Address, October 2005)," *Journal of American Folklore* 120, no. 476 (2007): 140.
[460] Bilal, interview.

Beware the Swine

Muhammad discouraged meat consumption on a number of counts. Pork, of course, was altogether prohibited. Other meat had to be properly butchered,[461] but chicken was difficult because those animals allowed out of their cages might have scavenged for worms and bugs. Because according to Nation thought, the behavior and food of the animals you ate directly influenced your own character and behavior, scavenging animals were reprehensible. The whole notion of scavenging, indiscriminately and desperately consuming whatever came your way, was directly opposed to the rational, restrained character of a Nation Muslim. Therefore, Muhammad wanted his followers to avoid scavenging animals. "Allah has taught me that chickens are not good for us to eat. They are quite filthy (inasmuch as they do not eat the cleanest of food), but we eat them."[462] However, when the chickens' diet was carefully controlled, Muhammad thought them good to eat: "You may eat chicken if it is raised away from filth. There are poultry raisers who raise chickens in clean places and give them good food such as corn, oats and other little grains that are not harmful to the chicken or to us. They also give them bread and milk. You do not have to fear eating chickens like these."[463]

Fish did not require special butchering, but Muhammad spoke against those fish known as scavengers, such as catfish, because of what they may have eaten underwater. "When eating fish, we should confine our fish eating to those fish weighing between one

[461] "If you would like to find good food, such as lamb, beef or even chicken—if you are a Muslim—buy it from the strictly Orthodox Jew. . . . Orthodox Jews are excellent in protecting their health." Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 1*, 11.
[462] Ibid., 61.
[463] Ibid., 50.

and ten pounds. As I said previously do not eat the scavengers of the sea such as oysters, crabs, clams, snails, shrimp, eels, or catfish. The catfish is a very filthy fish. He loves filth and is the pig of the water."[464] Southerners ate catfish, but once again Nation Muslims did not reject them explicitly on that account. Small fish that did not scavenge made for good eating. In fact, Bilal remembers the Nation was the biggest importer of fish from Peru in 1974; he said that Secretary of State Henry Kissinger sent a threatening letter to the government of Peru warning its leaders not to do business with Nation Muslims.[465]

Because people took on the characteristics of the food they ate, those who ate pork risked sloth, waywardness, and ugliness: "The poisonous hog flesh makes the color of many people's eyes muddy and reddish in appearance and makes the people who eat it brazen, careless, easy to anger, fight, and oppose each other."[466] Elijah Muhammad associated this animal with the injunction supporting infrequent mealtimes. Pigs ate frequently, so Nation Muslims would limit themselves to a maximum of one meal per day:

> The foolish idea of eating three or four times a day—and all between meals—is like the poisonous swine who never has any regular eating habit. Even a dog will not eat when he is full most of the time. The hog, however, swallows as long as he can, and then regrets that he can't keep swallowing. He will crawl into his food and wait until he can swallow some more.[467]

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[464] Ibid., 60–61.
[465] Bilal, interview.
[466] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 1*, 33.
[467] Ibid., 3.

Newspaper articles reinforced this idea. The May 11, 1973, issue of *Muhammad Speaks* celebrated the publication of *How to Eat to Live.* Among the full-page cartoons that emphasized the book's major points is one that depicted a black Christian minister stopping by the kitchen, where a church deacon grilled pork ribs. "Remember the white man's words, Deacon Jones, 'cook the poisonous swine flesh thoroughly done and it's all right to eat.'"[468] Deacon Jones wore a cook's hat and an undershirt. He was overweight and balanced a cigarette from his lips while he salted the ribs. Smoke from the cigarette mirrored the smoke rising from the ribs, underlining the hazard ribs posed. Although a Christian minister was hardly likely to refer to pork ribs as "poisonous swine flesh," this one's words effectively conveyed the link between Christianity and deception of the black man. How could sufficient cooking make poison go away? His appearance also gave the lie to the white man's reassurance, as this man in his clergy collar obviously resembled a pig, with ham-shaped thighs, a round porcine body, protruding ears, and a large pig nose. Eating pork meant looking like a pig.

Two pages later another of Gerald 2X's drawings provided a more vivid image of whites' deception of blacks. An (again) overweight black man wearing (again) a clergy collar sat in a restaurant, reading the Bible. Meanwhile, an unkempt Uncle Sam (overweight, disheveled and unshaven, with missing teeth) served him a pig's head on a platter and explained, "What God says 'thou shall not do,' I say thou shall do." Behind Uncle Sam waited a bowl of pasta covered in pigs' feet. The clergyman looked both gullible and puzzled as he pointed to his Bible in response. Clearly, slovenly Uncle Sam

[468] Gerald 2X, "Hog Divinely Prohibited," *Muhammad Speaks*, May 11, 1973.

had lied about what food was good for the body; he himself had lost his teeth, his fitness, and any semblance of refinement by consuming such a diet. God's word even in the form of the Bible—a less-worthy source than the Qur'an—prohibited pork.

Eating for Health and Respectability

As we have seen, prohibitions against meat were not intended primarily to keep Nation Muslims separate from other Americans, but contributed to health and to the American values of elegant appearance and deportment. Muhammad condemned pork for two main reasons: it brought about decrepit appearance and behavior, and it was "poison" to the system. Rather than separate Nation Muslims from other Americans, these values of attractiveness and good health provided a justification for prohibitions that could promote common understanding.

Thus, Elijah Muhammad did not decry forbidden foods because they made his people behave like whites; he worried instead that such foods made them behave like pigs and other scavengers. Eating well could mean eating like respectable whites, which meant they would have more rather than less in common. For example, he advised, "Peas, collard greens, turnip greens, sweet potatoes and white potatoes are very cheaply raised foods. The Southern slave masters used them to feed the slaves, and still advise the consumption of them. Most white people of the middle and upper class do not eat this lot of cheap food, which is unfit for human consumption."[469] White people were not exemplary; they deliberately contributed to a corrosive diet for African Americans, but Nation Muslims did not need to define their diet entirely in opposition to white habits.

[469] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book No. 1*, 5.

Prohibited foods in the Nation recalled the foods that slaves ate: chitlins, black-eyed peas, collard greens, and cornbread. But when Elijah Muhammad and his followers described these foods they did not say, "We reject these foods because we want to differentiate ourselves from slaves; we want, through food, to nourish in ourselves the creation of a new identity." Instead, they rejected these foods based on elegant behavior, appearance, and good health. Slaves did not choose what foods they would eat, and through the process of slavery, they lost their native, healthful ways of eating. Slave masters chose what slaves could eat, and they chose foods that were detrimental. Therefore, Nation Muslims rejected slave food not to reject the slave, but to reject the unwholesome food the master provided him. Throughout their conversations about food prohibitions, Nation leaders and members emphasized that they rejected foodstuffs the white man taught them to eat. At the same time, their conversations rehearsed the wisdom of science and scientific eating for health. Avoiding proscribed foods would make them healthier, better behaved, and more refined.

Despite all the ink spilled about the dangers of meat, many Nation Muslims still ate it, though they might not have been able to eat as much of it as they wished. Economic circumstances made it more difficult for Nation Muslims to obtain meat than it was for Latter-day Saints. Bilal described meat as a treat: "When you go out to eat, you want meat on your plate."[470] But he acknowledged that members who lived in areas without a kosher butcher often had to do without. Perhaps meat consumption was

[470] Bilal described a typical meal from a Nation Muslim restaurant as including 1) strained bean soup, 2) wheat roll, 3) fish, lamb, or chicken, 4) two sides, which might include macaroni and cheese, green vegetable, carrots, string beans, okra, or stewed tomatoes. Bilal, interview.

discouraged because the Nation's emblematic food, the navy bean from which they made bean pie and Elijah Muhammad's beloved bean soup, was a viable source of protein. The tens of pounds of navy beans that Nation Muslims stored in their homes could easily and inexpensively be made into nourishing dishes. Though their leader generally advised against eating meat, they ate it anyway, but the conditions of meat consumption (even if they could afford it, they could eat only certain kinds of meat that had been killed in the proper way) made it a little less prevalent among Nation Muslims than it was among Latter-day Saints.

Conclusion

Scholars have traditionally interpreted the food prohibitions of religious groups as filling the role of boundary maintenance—keeping group members separate from nonmembers and particularly helping to diminish occurrences of intermarriage with other groups. I have shown that although food prohibitions for Nation Muslims and Latter-day Saints may have distanced them from nonmembers in some areas, overall the way they chose to interpret and pursue their food prohibitions promoted allegiance with the broader American community. Nation converts, for example, did not stop going home for Christmas even though Elijah Muhammad rejected Christmas as a cause for celebration. Nation Muslims returning home experienced tension with their loved ones over food prohibitions, such as when they could not join in eating the Christmas ham. But their loved ones often came to respect their religious and food choices because of the shared values members invoked to explain their prohibitions, such as good health. Likewise, although not eating pork might seem strange to their fellow Americans, what they hoped

to achieve through this prohibition—elegance in behavior and appearance—was an aspiration widely shared outside group boundaries.

As with Nation Muslims, Latter-day Saints' prohibitions may have seemed strange to outsiders, but what they hoped to accomplish through the prohibitions did not. They cited scientific evidence that supported how their prohibitions contributed to their overall health. Latter-day Saints experienced tension when rejecting tea, coffee, and alcohol in social situations, and they were instructed not to feel ashamed at such events. But instead of encouraging them to avoid engaging with people who did drink, they were taught to be gracious in those situations. Furthermore, when opportunities did come along to use prohibitions in a way that would make them sharply distinct from mainstream American society, such as by following Leah Widtsoe's dietary guidelines or becoming vegetarian, the main body of Latter-day Saints rejected these paths and allied themselves more closely with mainstream habits.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Prohibitions, favorite dishes, growing food, storing food, eating food, not eating food—all of these aspects of food habits tell a story about the ways Nation Muslims and Latter-day Saints from 1930 to 1980 have invoked traditional American values but applied those values in their own way. Through these efforts, both groups have sought a comfortable balance between being "in but not of" the world, straddling a middle ground between retrenchment and assimilation. This study has shown how at the same time that Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims rebelled against what they defined as American transgressions or faults, they negotiated their own worth in relation to American values that they had thoroughly internalized.

In chapter 1, "Good to Eat," I discussed how Nation Muslims create altered versions of traditional dishes based on their understanding of good health (a move toward assimilation) instead of a desire for radical change (separation). However, their alterations do create social distance between them, Americans eating traditional Southern food (even their own families), and the diet of the American slave. Careful examination of recipes and favorite dishes demonstrates that Nation Muslims' foods were actually carefully modified traditional foods. An ingredient in a familiar dish may have changed, but the general character and flavors of that dish remained the same. Eating bean pie and carrot fluff for health reasons therefore set in motion processes that simultaneously integrated and distanced Nation Muslims from American culture. The close readings of recipes in this chapter also reveal that LDS welfare priorities such as self-sufficiency,

frugality, and food storage shaped LDS dishes more than the Latter-day Saints' canonized dietary code, the Word of Wisdom. Latter-day Saints turned more frequently to their well-stocked larders and freezers for ingredients than to Word of Wisdom guidance to eat large quantities of grains, fruits, and vegetables in season and only a little meat. Self-sufficiency may have trumped other concerns in this way because that value had been crucial in ameliorating negative public opinion of the Saints after they established the Church Welfare Program in 1936.

As I discussed in chapter 2, the LDS Church's self-sufficiency had an assimilationist impact because it was important to mainstream Americans and helped them find something to admire about Latter-day Saints. But it also separated Latter-day Saints from others because they wanted to be better at it than their American neighbors and eventually to use it instead of government welfare.[471] So they established farms, new structures, and protocols. They stored food collectively and individually, and they tried their hands at gardening. Although they were part of a much more urban movement, Nation Muslims in pursuit of self-sufficiency also took up farming, but they looked to enterprise as well. Supporting their own members' grocery stores, bakeries, and restaurants, Elijah Muhammad's requests for financial contributions, *Muhammad Speaks,* and the sale of whiting fish, they pursued an American value (thereby promoting assimilation) in a way that created alternatives to American food systems (which led to separatism).

[471] This is what they wanted, not really what they achieved.

In chapter 3, table habits show how Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims engaged American strategies like cleanliness and proper table settings to prove themselves refined (assimilation). But they worked to be cleaner and more refined than other Americans (separation). Full-time female homemakers were a part of their vision, and as white Protestant American women began to enter the workforce, Nation Muslims and Latter-day Saints increased their rhetoric about women's role in the home.

Chapter 4 on fasting also demonstrates how the notion of chosenness, which was firmly entrenched in American culture, is common to white Protestant Americans, Latter-day Saints, and Nation Muslims. While fasting was no longer an important religious observance for white Protestants in the middle twentieth century, both Nation Muslims and Latter-day Saints fasted and considered fasting to be a sign of their chosen status. Nation Muslims ate once a day in order to recover the longevity of Biblical figures like Methuselah and to foster the health and clear thinking of their scientist ancestors of Shabbazz. Latter-day Saint fasts made members into a more cohesive community, provided them a way to fill the Biblical mandate to care for the poor (since they donated money they would have spent on food to a fund for the poor) and increased demonstrations of God's power on their behalf.

Finally, Latter-day Saint and Nation understandings of food prohibitions in chapter 5 reiterates their emphasis on an American approach to food and good health. Both groups cite health as the major reason for their prohibitions. By following the prohibitions in pursuit of an American vision, they sought to be more successful in rejecting temptation and maintaining good health than those Protestants ever were.

Prohibitions also helped members of both groups to avoid drunkenness and other unsuitable behaviors. Prohibitions had a tendency to separate Latter-day Saints and Nation Muslims from those outside their traditions, but this tendency has been overemphasized by scholars who extrapolate from the work of Mary Douglas. The relationship between food regulation and boundary maintenance was different for the people Douglas studied than for twentieth-century Americans, and because they wished to gain converts, they constructed more fluid boundaries than groups such as the ancient Israelites. Strict boundary maintenance points to separatism, whereas I suggest the preoccupation with prohibitions and good health show that assimilation was also at work in prohibitions for the Nation of Islam and the LDS Church.

Let's conclude by imagining two ideal meals that demonstrate this balance. Both meals illustrate the daily theological prioritizing that the two groups put into their food preparation and consumption, and both meals demonstrate how the groups internalized American cultural influences of chosenness, health, and self-sufficiency.

Both meals take place at the end of a day without food. For the Nation Muslim, it is a day like any other where they consume their only meal between 4 and 6 p.m. The table is impeccably clean and neatly set, with a spoon on the left and a fork on the right. Diners sit upright in their chairs, the whole scenario proving their ease with American standards of refinement as well as their distinction from other Americans (who reverse their forks and spoons). They eat several dishes, starting with navy bean soup, a favorite of the prophet Elijah Muhammad, which they keep ready-made and bottled in their pantry. After soup they eat whiting fish, which they bought frozen from the brother who

sells them *Muhammad Speaks* each week. With the fish they eat green beans, carrot fluff, and rice to keep up their strength after a day of hard work. A sister gave them the rice recipe from MGT class, and eating it brings a strong sense of Temple community to their dining table. Carrot fluff reminds them of their grandmother; it tastes like the sweet potatoes she used to make. At the same time, that carrot reminds them of their choice to be different. Elijah Muhammad has taught them sweet potatoes are not good for their health. As they sit and enjoy their nutritious food, they know they are participating in habits that tie them to their ancestors, the original people of Shabazz, whose eating habits fostered health, longevity, and excellence. They have also contributed to their community by buying Elijah Muhammad's Peruvian fish from a fellow Muslim. And by the way, no one smokes or drinks after dinner.

The Latter-day Saints are more anxious to eat; they only fast once a month, so they are uncommonly hungry. Before they eat, they pray to express thanks for the food on their table and reiterate requests they have made through their fast. Their table setting is very clean, too. Except for dessert, they eat their food all at once, not in courses, but there is more food than usual because of the fast. Occasionally during the meal someone will wonder how cousin Susan is; she was in a car accident and they fasted for her today to help her recover quickly and well. For a main dish, they eat a roast their mother defrosted from the freezer, accompanied by canned green beans, a Relief Society sister's recipe for funeral potatoes, green Jell-O with carrots, homemade rolls with homemade raspberry jam, and grandma's recipe for peach pie, made with home-canned peaches. The

children remember the late-summer day when they picked the peaches in their grandma's backyard. No one smokes or drinks after dinner.

Worlds of meaning infuse these two meals. The highest priorities that influence what they eat are aspirations to good health for Nation Muslims and self-sufficiency for Latter-day Saints. Neither family has eaten yet that day, because Nation Muslims established a once-a-day eating routine to promote longevity and Latter-day Saints go hungry once a month in an effort to provide for the poor, fortify their community, and increase their experience of God's blessings. Both approach table setting, serving, and etiquette in the refined manner that befits God's people, and both obey his advice to eschew alcoholic beverages and tobacco.

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