

## AFROCENTRIC APOLOGETICS: FIGHTING FOR THE SOULS OF OUR PEOPLE

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:” KJV 1 Peter 3:15

### Introduction

In 1 Peter 3:15, the apostle instructs us as believers in Christ to always be prepared to provide an answer or “defense” to anyone that would inquire about our faith in Jesus Christ. The technical term for “defending the faith” is “apologetics.” Each of us as born-again believers have been called by God to share our faith with others. *“Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” John 20:21 KJV*

Consequently, it is vitally important that we know how to explain our beliefs intelligently and defend them effectively. Of course, this takes some study and some effort on our part. The scriptures provide encouragement in this area in: 2 Tim 2:15 the bible reads: *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” KJV.*

The good news in all of this is that much of the work has been done for us. From the very beginning of the Judeo-Christian religion God has called men as defenders of His word and the Holy Ghost has enabled these men to teach others by endowing them with supernatural enlightenment and understanding. 2 Peter 1:21 best expresses this dynamic; it reads: *“For the prophecy*

*came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. KJV”* As you and I go about this task, we are in reality standing on the shoulders of giants of the faith. The famous inventor Thomas Edison once said “I start where the last man left off.” This is precisely how we approach the work of a Christian apologist.

### Our Purpose

The work of the Christian apologist must be both rooted and driven by their sincere love for Jesus Christ and for His gospel of salvation. As Christian apologist, we aren’t concerned about winning arguments, but we are very much concerned about winning souls to Christ!

### More Specific

This particular study will approach the art and science of Christian apologetics from an Afro-Centric perspective. Let me explain further. One of the issues stemming from the tremendous trauma of slavery upon blacks in America was the total loss of racial and ethnic identity. This was equally true when it came to Christianity. Most of these ex-slaves had been presented with a “white-washed” version of the bible. That is to say, many of our white brothers had committed scriptural and historical

genocide by attempting to annihilate any black presence from the scriptures and from the history of Christianity. Our early black church leaders had to struggle to recapture the true nature of the scriptures and reapply them within their proper and right context as it related to black folk living in America. Because many blacks believed that Christianity was a religion that was forced on black people, they viewed this

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effort by the black church as a counterfeit religion. Even today many blacks see the black church as just a colored

extension of the "white man's" religion. This perspective created a spiritual identity crisis among black people. Seeking to find what they felt was a more authentic racially relevant alternative, many turned away from the teachings of the black church and turned to the teachings of other organizations that seemed to provide them with more racially relevant perspectives about black history, racial identity and racial dignity. For many in this population, race and spirituality are inseparable.

In addition, for many of those born after 1970, were born in the wake of the great Civil Rights Movement and over the years have witnessed the decline of the black church's social-domestic influence and relevance within the black community. Over time, this has led to a lot of our young people struggling to find the black church's

"real-life" importance, relevancy and applicability. This study will seek to reconnect all generations of people with the undeniable truths of the bible especially as it relates to African-Americans and to point out the false teachings, and the misleading and deceitful accusations that many of these other groups have attempted to make against Christianity and the role of blacks in the religion. The Church of the Living God (C.W.F.F) truly has a tremendous role to play in this matter. Founded in 1889, the church is the oldest non-denominational church in the nation, and one of the very few black churches that came about without any direct European affiliation. This history makes us especially suited to address this issue in both a biblically and racially relevant manner.

We hope that this series of lessons will support the goals and aims of the Church of the Living God's VISION COMMISSION's efforts to "retain" our current congregants while working to "reclaim" that missing demographic of younger people who may be trapped in the snare of biblical and historical misunderstandings and the false teachings of other religious or pseudo-spiritual groups.

-Bishop Rex M. Waddell

### **The Nation of Islam's Origin**

Few religious organizations are as well known within the black community as the Nation of Islam (NOI). The movement finds its origin in the 1920 creation of a black nationalistic organization called the Moorish Science Temple of America. Under the leadership of its North Carolina born founder Timothy Drew Ali (later changed to Noble Drew Ali), the organization's name changed several times: The Moorish Holy Temple, The Moorish Divine Moment and many more. After Reconstruction, many blacks began migrating from the south to the north in search of better jobs and social opportunities. Declaring that he was the last prophet sent by Allah to the black people in America, Ali looked to provide these blacks with a racial identity supposedly provided by divinely inspired historical and cultural roots. Ali's doctrine taught that blacks were actual descendants of Asians who had immigrated to Africa. These people were traditionally called the Moors and were traditionally Muslim in religion. Ali taught that blacks in America were not, negroes, blacks, or colored but were Asiatic and that Christianity was the "white-man's" religion.

In 1930, one of Noble Ali's followers named W. D. Fard, founded what was initially called "The Lost Found Nation of Islam" and later was renamed: "The Nation of Islam." Referred to as "Master Farrad Muhammad, Muhammad declared that he

was in fact Allah in the flesh and had come to teach the black man his true identity (Mason, 2021). Fard pioneered the notion of self-reliance within the black community fostering the creation of black owned bakeries, fish markets and other businesses. After several incarcerations, in 1934, Fard simply disappeared. In his absence a young man named Elijah Poole (later renamed Elijah Muhammad) became leader of the organization until his death in 1975.

One of Elijah Muhammad's most famous recruits was Malcolm Little (whose name was changed to Malcolm X). For a while the two enjoyed a close relationship, but over time severe disagreements arose and Elijah Muhammad permanently suspended Malcolm X from the Nation. After this, their relationship completely fell apart as Malcolm began to speak publicly against Elijah Muhammad's personal life and questionable dealings with the KKK. Eventually Malcolm was assassinated and after Elijah Muhammad's death and much organizational chaos, Louis Farrakhan eventually emerged as the new leader. At 89 years old, Louis Farrakhan continues to lure blacks, especially black men by attempting to provide them with a sense of racial and ethnical identity all provided by a falsely constructed narrative.

### **Summary**

Like most nationalistically driven religions, the National of Islam movement continues to play on the damaged self-

esteem and self-image of blacks that were marred by the traumatic impact of slavery, loss of human dignity perpetuated by systematic racism. The Nation of Islam attempts to offer blacks an “identity replacement” theology, exchanging one broken self-image for one distorted and inflated by falsehoods, hatred and untruths.

### **This is God’s Business**

We must always keep in mind that our ultimate goal in apologetics is not to win arguments, but to win souls. Consequently, any witnessing encounter should be about genuine love and concern about that person and their soul. In addition, as with all God-directed activities, this action must begin with prayer and continue with prayer. We should pray for the assistance of the Holy Ghost, asking God to convict the Nation of Islam followers of their false doctrine and convince them of their need for Jesus Christ. The scriptures teach us that such spiritual conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit. “And when He comes, He will convict and convince the world and bring demonstration to it about sin and about righteousness (uprightness of heart and right standing with God) and about judgment.” John 16:8 AMP This is not something that’s going to be settled during a heated discussion at your neighborhood barbershop; and it probably wouldn’t be a good idea for you to gather up several of your Christian friends and stage a spiritual intervention on your Nation of Islam friend.

But this will require prayer, time and a willingness to build relationships.

### **What Makes the Nation of Islam so Attractive to Our Black Brothers?**

Keep in mind that the major attraction of the Nation of Islam is not so much spiritual as it is social and psychological. The Nation of Islam provides its members with a strong

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Afro-centric identity. It especially affirms black men and the black race in general as superior to whites. Likewise,

it addresses social-economic disparities, racial injustices and encourages economic independence. In essence, the nation attempts to restore the dignity of black people that has been marred by slavery and the impact of systematic racism in this nation. In short, the Nation of Islam strives to make Black people feel good about themselves as a people.

### **Important Witnessing Points**

Again, it is important to keep in mind that the Nation of Islam doesn’t present such a strong religious doctrine but rather provides its followers with strong personal and social identity submerged in black nationalism. The Nation’s followers make several accusations against Christianity and the Black church in general. Here are some major issues raised by the Nation of Islam

against Christianity and the black church and the church's proper response.

**The Nation of Islam Claims:**

"The black church has fallen short in truly addressing the problems in the black community."

**The Church's Response:**

The black church was totally instrumental in the founding of Historical Black Colleges and Universities in the U.S. In addition, while the Nation of Islam remained sidelined, thousands of black churches and pastors partnered with Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King and the life-changing efforts of the Civil Rights Movement that among other things brought about voting rights and ended segregation for blacks in this country.

**The Nation of Islam Claims**

"Christianity is polytheistic (believes in many gods) this goes against the teaching of their own bible. The Nation of Islam is monotheistic (believes in one God – Allah)."

**The Church's Response**

The Nation of Islam teaches that there have been many gods through out history and that the first god created himself out of "triple darkness." Furthermore, they teach that after the death of this original god, the universe was ruled by a divine council of twenty-three Black gods called "scientist" and one major god called Allah. These gods did not live forever, but produced other gods to replace them. They teach that their

founder W.D. Fard was one of those gods (Mason, 2021). Furthermore, the bible clearly teaches us that there is only one God:

Deuteronomy 6:4

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: KJV

The bible also teaches us that our God is a spirit.

John 4:24

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. KJV

**The Nation of Islam Claims:**

"Jesus never claimed to be God or equal to God and was just a prophet."

**The Church's Response**

Several scriptures proclaim the deity of Jesus Christ.

- Jesus is eternal: (Col. 1: 15 – 17, Heb 1:2; Rev. 1:8).
- Jesus is omnipresent (Matt 18:20, 28:20)
- Jesus is omniscient (Matt 9:4, John 2:25; 16:30).
- Jesus is omnipotent (Matt 28:18, Col 2: 8 – 9; Col 2:8 – 9; Heb. 1:1 – 4).
- Jesus is preexistent (John 3:13, 31, 6: 41 – 42, 62; 13:3, 16:28).
- Jesus is the creator of EVERYTHING (Gen 1;1, John 1: 1 – 3; Col 1:16, Heb 1:2).

### The Nation of Islam Claims

Its founder, "W.D. Fard (later called Master Farrad Muhammad and Eljah Muhammad were gods."

### The Church's Response

In the following scripture, Jesus declares himself to be absolutely essential to salvation and with this declaration, Jesus rules out anyone else's claims as Savior.

John 8:23-24

23 And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.

24 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins. KJV

The verse here in 1 Timothy establishes Jesus as the only mediator between God and man.

1 Tim 2:5

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; KJV

Finally, here, Jesus personally warns us against false prophets and those who would falsely claim to be the Christ or some divine Savior.

Matt 24:24-26

24 For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect-if that

were possible. 25 See, I have told you ahead of time.

26 "So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. NIV

All of these scriptures establish the fact the neither Fard or Elijah Muhammad could rightfully claim to be God, Savior or divine mediator between God and man.

### Successful Witnessing to Nation of Islam Followers

First, I suppose we should better define what "success" in this matter really means. The prophet Isaiah wrote:

"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." KJV Isaiah 55:11

God's word is so powerful that when we share it with others miraculous things can

**Work towards building a real relationship with the NOI and always continue to pray for them.**

happen. In this way, just sharing God's word with others is "success" all by itself because God promised that his word

will always "accomplish" exactly what He intended it to do. Practically speaking, when witnessing to Nation of Islam

followers keep in mind that the major attraction that the organization offers its followers is a strong racial identity and an affirming self-image. Their doctrine is extremely weak when it comes to historical facts and biblical support. Stressing the person and work of Jesus Christ and revealed in the bible must be an essential component of your witness as this completely counters what their followers have been taught about Jesus Christ. Again, I cannot over stress the need to avoid heated arguments, but reach out in genuine love and concern for these individual's souls. Remember, these followers may not be converted in one conversation. Work towards building a real relationship with the NOI and always continue to pray for them.

#### References

Mason, E. (2021). In *Urban apologetics: Restoring black dignity with the gospel* (p. 80). Zondervan.