

THE FORMS OF JAH: THE MYSTIC COLLECTIVITY OF THE RASTAFARIANS
AND ITS ORGANIZATIONAL PRECIPITATES

by

Yasmin Jiwani

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APPROVAL

Name: Yasmin Jiwani

Degree: Master of Arts

Title of thesis: The Forms of Jah: The Mystic Collectivity of
the Rastafarians and its Organizational
Precipitates

Examining Committee:

Chairman: Dr. Noel Dyck

John Whitworth
Senior Supervisor

~~Robert~~ Robert Wyllie

Philip Wagner
External Examiner
Geography Department
Simon Fraser University

Date Approved: December 9, 1983

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**The Forms of Jah: The Mystic Collectivity of the
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Author: _____

(signature)

Yasmin Jiwani

(name)

December 13, 1983

(date)

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the Rastafarian movement as a whole utilizing concepts developed in the sociology of religion for the analysis of differing types of religious organizations. The thesis demonstrates that the Rastafarian movement constitutes a mystic collectivity. Further, the thesis analyzes various groups precipitated by the Rastafarian collectivity which approximate to ideal types of cult and sect. In addition, the politically inclined groups extant in the Rastafarian tradition are also examined. The aim of the thesis is thus twofold; to assess the utility of the concept of the mystic collectivity and to analyze the range of groups generated by the Rastafarian religious tradition.

This thesis was undertaken in response to perceived inadequacies in the sociological literature on Rastafarianism. Much of this literature is now outdated and even contemporary works present only partial analyses of the movement. It is argued that the concept of the mystic collectivity provides an heuristic device through which the Rastafarian movement can be apprehended as a totality, albeit a totality whose structure permits the crystallization of widely varying forms of religious and politically oriented religious organizations.

The research strategy employed in this thesis involved the use of both literary sources in the sociology of religion and on the Rastafarian movement. Participant observation was also conducted in the indigenous Jamaican context of Rastafarianism

and amongst the Rastafarians in Western Canada. The thesis concludes that the Rastafarian movement displays features which correspond to those of a mystic collectivity, and that the various groups within this collectivity approximate to sectarian and cultic forms. Additionally, the thesis concludes that the Rastafarian tradition is an inherently dynamic one possessing the capacity to generate a wide variety of organizational forms both in response and reaction to varying socio-cultural environments. It appears that the hitherto largely unutilized concept of the mystic collectivity might prove of significant heuristic value in analyzing the development of similar religiously inspired movements.

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I. Introduction

The Rastafarian movement originated as a black Jamaican based millenarian movement in the 1930's. Since then, the Rastafarian phenomenon has grown rapidly and spread, not only to other parts of the Caribbean, but is also manifest in parts of North America, and England. In this respect, the movement has transcended geographic, racial and cultural boundaries. However, since its inception in the 1930's the Rastafarian movement has undergone dramatic changes both in terms of its theology and with respect to the nature of its membership. Moreover, the spread of the movement to other parts of the world has engendered the manifestation of varying forms of Rastafarianism which diverge significantly from its manifestation in the Jamaican context. Yet there seem to be common denominators that are shared by the various forms of Rastafarianism, and which function as demarcating lines differentiating the Rastafarians from their non-Rastafarian counterparts.

The Rastafarian movement also embodies a range of groups which exhibit a variety of structural features and which are mobilized around particular interpretations of the belief system. These groups range from those that are highly committed to a religious interpretation of Rastafarianism to those that espouse a politically inclined interpretation of this faith. As such the movement's membership is highly heterogenous,

reflecting differential degrees of commitment and interpretations of Rastafarianism. While the composition of the membership is racially concentrated in terms of the number of blacks who adhere to it, there are Rastafarians that come from widely varying racial and cultural backgrounds.

Existing literature on the Rastafarian movement, while informative on various aspects of the Rastafarian tradition, does not offer any substantive analysis of the heterogenous nature of the movement. Rather, a majority of the studies of the Rastafarian movement treat the phenomenon as a monolithic entity. To a large extent, most of these treatments of the Rastafarian movement are highly specific in their focus, concentrating on various aspects of the movement such as its music (e.g. Clarke, 1980, Shibata, 1981), the sacramental use of marijuana (e.g. Ansley, 1981), its lifestyle or 'livity' (e.g. Nicholas, 1979), while others offer analyses of the movement in one specific geographical context (e.g. Barrett, 1968, Campbell, 1980b, Cashmore, 1979, Wilson, 1978).

In addition, studies of the Rastafarian tradition have so far not addressed questions pertaining to the factors contributing to the movement's rapid growth and spread. Yet the phenomenal growth of the Rastafarian movement in the last five decades raises a number of questions from the sociological perspective dealing with the appeal of the movement, its ability to satisfy the needs of the membership, the mechanisms for the dissemination of its religious tradition, and the differences

between its manifestations in varying social contexts.

Intimately related to this issue of the movement's geographic extension is the question regarding the nature of its underlying structure. A review of the literature suggests that early studies of Rastafarianism which typified the latter as a millennial messianic 'cult' have formed the corner stone of later academic attempts to understand the social reality of Rastafarianism insofar as its overall organization is concerned.

Most of the studies on the Rastafarian movement have anchored their conception of Rastafarianism on the millennial and messianic nature of the belief system. Yet the labelling of the movement as a 'cult' of various types, i.e. a 'politico-religious cult' (Kitzinger, 1969, Simpson, 1955a, 1955b), 'a messianic cult' (Barrett, 1968), 'a cult of outcasts' (Patterson, 1964) is also a predominant feature in the literature.

While there are definitely 'cultic' elements in the Rastafarian movement, an examination of the literature on typologies of religious organizations reveals that a blanket conceptualization of the movement as a 'cult' is highly inaccurate and moreover does not take into consideration the various groups extant in the movement or the markedly varying interpretations of Rastafarianism.

Furthermore, Rastafarianism, though exhibiting millennial aspirations and tendencies, also contains various other streams of thought which do not fall into the category of

millenarianism. There are a number of groups within the Rastafarian collectivity that are mobilized around a more politically oriented interpretation of the Rastafarian belief system. In this respect, these groups translate the millenarian and messianic elements of the belief system into concrete actions with the goal of seeking repatriation through existing socio-political mechanisms.

It is interesting to note that millennial movements often adopt, wittingly or unwittingly, the response of institutionalization as a strategy for curbing the encroaching process of secularization and as a mechanism by which to sustain a level of religious fervour. This type of response is not evident in the Rastafarian case. On the contrary, the movement has not only survived and expanded in the last fifty years but it has also manifested a propensity towards precipitating groups which either survive or merge back into the Rastafarian tradition.

The present study of the Rastafarian movement has, in part, been motivated by the deficiencies in the literature on the Rastafarians, and by the negatively connotated, albeit popular labelling of the movement as a 'cult'. In addition, the present study is also instigated by the lack of analyses of the Rastafarian movement as a whole or of the structure of the various groups extant within the movement, and of a comparative analysis of its different forms in varying social contexts. On a theoretical level, this research is also prompted by the

availability of conceptual tools within the sociology of religion which are to a large extent untested due to the lack of their application to empirical phenomena.

This thesis examines the Rastafarian movement employing concepts derived from the various typologies of religious organizations which have been developed by sociologists of religion. The primary objective is to determine the utility of the concept of the 'mystic collectivity' in contributing to a better understanding of the nature and dynamics of the Rastafarian movement. The choice of this particular theoretical framework is rooted in the religious nature of the Rastafarian tradition and its conceptualization as a 'millennial movement' and 'cult' in the existing literature on the Rastafarian movement.

Utilizing the typologies of religious organizations available in the sociology of religion, this thesis analyzes particular groups in the Rastafarian tradition in terms of their approximation to the ideal types of sect and cult. In line with these objectives, this thesis also demonstrates the impact of social, economic and cultural variables in determining the nature and evolution of Rastafarianism in widely varying social contexts. In contrast to the uniform and homogeneous portrait of Rastafarianism depicted in the literature dealing with the movement, this thesis demonstrates the highly varied character of Rastafarian membership and the overall heterogeneous nature of the Rastafarian tradition.

The final objective addressed in the thesis concerns the relationship between the rapid growth and spread of the Rastafarian movement and the nature of its tradition. This takes into consideration characteristics of the Rastafarian tradition which promote its growth, its appeal to its membership, the functions it fulfills for its members in different social contexts, as well as the interaction between needs of the membership and their active participation in formulating a variant of Rastafarianism that is appropriate to the socio-cultural and political character of the social context.

Research strategy

The research strategy utilized in this thesis combined both theoretical and observational tools of analysis. However, due to the the nature of the investigation, which involved an examination of the utility of a conceptual tool in relation to an analysis of the Rastafarian movement, a greater emphasis on the theoretical aspect of the research strategy was necessary. Nonetheless, for the second part of the thesis which involved a comparative examination of the Canadian variant of Rastafarianism in relation to its English and Jamaican counterparts, observational analysis was employed.

There were other reasons that influenced the choice of research strategy employed in this thesis. In part, the restriction on time placed constraints on conducting a full

empirical investigation of the phenomenon. However, this was not a major drawback in terms of the objectives of this study since existing literature on the Rastafarian movement contains a great deal of ethnographic data (e.g. Owens, 1976) and other information on various aspects of the Rastafarian tradition. In this respect, the observational analysis undertaken formed a secondary part of the total research strategy employed.

Three different sources of information contributed to the research utilized in this thesis. Firstly, a critical examination of the existing literature on the Rastafarian movement was undertaken. This review served to highlight the drawbacks in studies of the movement and also demonstrated the inaccurate conceptualization of the movement as a 'cult'. An examination of the literature in the sociology of religion dealing with the typologies of religious organizations also pointed to the differences between the Rastafarian movement as a whole and the ideal type of cult. A review of this literature revealed that another more potentially viable theoretical construct could be used to apprehend the social reality of the Rastafarian movement.

However, the use of ideal typical constructs in sociology has generated some criticisms which are rooted in the very nature of these theoretical constructs. Ideal types represent one qualitative method by which to understand social reality. An ideal type is a conceptual abstraction of a particular aspect of social reality. It is a selection of characteristics of the

phenomenon under investigation. However, this selection involves a process whereby some elements of the phenomenon are accentuated while others are downgraded. The ideal type incorporates those elements which are typical of the phenomenon or which compose its core components. It filters out the marginal elements while retaining the vital components. The ideal type seeks to grasp the internal rationality of the phenomenon - this rationality and the one-sided accentuation of characteristics are extrapolated to their utopian extremes to form ideal typical constructs. In this sense, the ideal type is 'unreal' since it embodies a distillation of central characteristics of a phenomenon in their pure abstraction.

The various typologies of religious organizations involve ideal typical constructs. Hence, testing the utility of a given ideal type has to take into consideration the 'unreal' nature of these theoretical constructs. There are limitations to the use of ideal types. Within the sociology of religion, the functions of ideal typical constructs can be summarized as constituting heuristic devices and yard sticks by which comparisons are facilitated and a better understanding of the phenomenon achieved. Through the construction and use of an ideal type, aspects of social reality can be measured in terms of how much they approximate to or deviate from a given type. Given that ideal types are not meant to mirror reality in all its detail, the task becomes one of locating a correlation between the type construct and the empirical reality such that even if all the

details of this reality do not correspond to details of the ideal type, the core components, at least, are present. However, ideal types do not represent reified and static types of social phenomenon. Rather, they are attempts to understand facets of social reality, single instances as in 'particular processes, actions and institutions'. Taken in this light, ideal types are then constantly subject to modification and change as newer and more complex attempts are made to understand the changing social reality. Ideal types cannot be true or false, rather, they are judged on the basis of their usefulness. At the same time, it must be stressed that ideal types are not purely abstract conceptualizations: they draw from an empirical base.

Thus, assessing the utility of the concept of the mystic collectivity in relation to the Rastafarian case involved an examination of the characteristics of the Rastafarian tradition with a view towards their approximation to the features of the mystic collectivity. In the same vein, groups within the Rastafarian movement were also analyzed in terms of how closely they approached ideal types of other religious organizations such as the cult and the sect. The existing literature on the Rastafarian movement served as a base for assessing their approximation to these ideal types. However, for additional information on various groups within the movement, other sources of information were required since the literature on the Rastafarian movement contained very little in the form of substantive analyses of these groups.

The observational analysis for this study was conducted in two parts. One section of this investigation was conducted amongst the Rastafarian community in Vancouver, Canada. The second section was undertaken in Jamaica. While the first part of the investigation provided important data on the Canadian variant of Rastafarianism, the second part of the investigation yielded more comprehensive information concerning the nature and organization of some of the groups extant in the Rastafarian movement in Jamaica. Both parts of the investigation served to facilitate a comparative analysis of the forms of Rastafarianism present in these two highly divergent social contexts. More importantly, the information derived from the Jamaican data served to provide a basis for assessing the utility of the concept of mystic collectivity in the case of the Rastafarian movement.

In the Jamaican context, the nature of the investigation took various forms. In the first instance, an examination of the literature was undertaken. The special collections section at the University of the West Indies contains a number of studies on the Rastafarian movement which are not available in Canada. For the most part these studies are in the form of theses and dissertations by students at the University and by outside scholars. This body of literature yielded a considerable amount of information on the Rastafarian movement in Jamaica, and also on the various groups extant in the movement (e.g. Albuquerque, 1977, Chevannes, 1971, McPherson, 1982, 1983 and Shibata, 1981).

In addition to the above, I also attended the annual Rastafarian International congress which took place at the University of the West Indies from July 18th to 25th, 1983. This provided first hand information on the various groups which were represented at the congress and their particular interpretation of Rastafarianism. There were several key concerns of the Rastafarian community addressed at this congress. Moreover, there were also Rastafarian representatives from various Caribbean islands, England, Canada, and the United States. This research served to provide information on the international membership of the movement. Some of the issues addressed at this congress included repatriation, education for Rastafarian children, legalization of marijuana, reports of the various missions to Africa, and the measures to be undertaken for the poor and the aged. The most important aspect of attending this congress was that it revealed the intense rivalry that exists between the various Rastafarian groups in Jamaica. Attendance at the congress also allowed me to meet and interact with Rastafarian members from both Jamaica and other parts of the world.

For the most part, informal interactions with the brethren formed the main aspect of the investigation. The Rastafarians in Jamaica, as opposed to Canada, are highly suspicious of researchers. They would not respond if the tape recorder was used and in some cases would even refuse to answer direct questions. Thus, the nature of the interviews was by and large

informal.¹ However, my key sources of information were Rastafarian academics. One of these informants was studying the theological aspects of the Rastafarian tradition. Being a Rastafarian himself, he had access to information which was, for the most part, unavailable to other researchers. However, my informal talks with other Rastafarians at the congress also served to balance out this emphasis on academic sources. I was also able to meet and participate in an interview with Professor Leonard Barrett who is considered to be an authority on the Rastafarian movement (Jamaica, July, 1983).

In addition to meeting Rastafarians in Kingston, where the University of the West Indies is situated, I also met a number of Rastafarians in Montego Bay. Most of the Rastafarians in Montego Bay also expressed suspicion at being interviewed by a researcher. Nonetheless, through informal conversations a significant amount of information was derived. With some of these Rastafarians, who were willing to engage in an informal discussion of their faith, I spent a fair amount of time - sometimes the conversation would last for two hours. Others, however, would only comment on a specific issue.

The content of these conversations substantiated the information available in Owen's (1976) highly informative account of the various Rastafarian groups in Kingston. Yet, I

¹ One Rastafarian, Mortimo Planno, who is very widely known amongst the Rastafarians resorted to 'interrogating' me for two hours in an attempt to ascertain my motives for studying the Rastafarian movement.

also came across Rastafarians who even though they manifested all the overt symbols of identification such as wearing dreadlocks, did not espouse a religious interpretation of the Rastafarian belief system. This finding supported the distinction in the literature between religious, political and functional Rastafarians (Albuquerque, 1977, Nettleford, 1973). Through various Rastafarian contacts, I was also able to meet one of the elders of the movement - Ras Boanarges who is the head of the Order of the Nyahbinghi. Informal conversations with Ras Boanarges provided information on yet another variation of the Rastafarian myth of creation. Above all, the section of the investigation undertaken in Jamaica proved an invaluable source of first hand information on the Rastafarian movement.²

There were several other sources which were utilized in Jamaica. These included a review of newspaper articles on the Rastafarian movement which are available at the Institute of Jamaica which is also located in Kingston. The Institute also publishes the Jamaica Journal which contains articles on the Rastafarian movement. Utilizing this source resulted in the accumulation of information which was relatively recent. (e.g. Hill's article on Leonard Howell, published in the Jamaica Journal, 1983). In addition to this, the Rastafarians I met also referred me to other literature sources such as Howell's book The Promised Key.

² On the whole, I had talked to approximately thirty Rastafarians who came from widely varying religious and socio-economic backgrounds.

Investigation of the Rastafarian movement in Vancouver provided information which was utilized to compare the variant of the movement in England to that extant in Western Canada. The tools of investigation in Vancouver involved a tape recorder which the Vancouver Rastafarians did not find as offensive as their Jamaican counterparts. In the Vancouver sample, the investigation included interviews which were also informal. Barrett (1968) has noted that this approach yields more information and is particularly suitable for studying the Rastafarians. In addition to interacting with the Rastafarians, I also observed members of the movement in terms of their interactions with non-black Rastafarians and the outside world. The nature of these observations was overt and occurred in the homes of various Rastafarians and in public areas where Rastafarians were present.

The Rastafarian population in Vancouver numbers approximately fifty to sixty individuals. Most of these members are immigrants from Jamaica. However, a small portion come from other Caribbean islands. Out of the total population, there are approximately ten individuals who come from non-black racial backgrounds. Out of these only one has Indian ancestry. The rest are white members. Amongst the white composition of the membership, most are women, although several white males are also present. The average age of the population ranges from twenty three to thirty five. While in depth interviews have not been conducted with all Rastafarian members in Vancouver, some

measure of social interaction has occurred with a large majority. Approximately twenty individuals were approached for the purposes of this study. While some consented to interviews the rest preferred to engage in 'reasoning' about their faith. Most of the data derived from this sample consists of information from these 'reasoning' sessions. ³

Information derived from these 'reasoning' sessions proved to be invaluable as an indicator of the range of interpretations extant amongst the Rastafarian community in Vancouver. This information also corresponds to Wilson's (1978) study of the Rastafarians in Toronto. Information from these 'reasoning' sessions was recorded in the form of notes. However, the recording occurred after the sessions since it was felt that note-taking during the discussion would only serve to inhibit participants.

Aside from the information derived from exchanges with Vancouver Rastafarians, a number of Jamaican Rastafarians were interviewed. These members were either passing through Vancouver and usually consisted of Reggae musicians or friends and relatives of the Rastafarians in Vancouver. Information resulting from interactions with musicians served to confirm the initial impression of the existence of various groups within the Rastafarian movement. While some of these musicians were affiliated to the Twelve Tribes of Israel organization in

³ Most of the researchers studying the movement have had to rely on these 'reasoning' sessions for their information on the movement (e.g. Barrett, 1977, Cashmore, 1979, Yawney 1979).

Jamaica, others were members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Approximately six Reggae bands were interviewed. Again the interviews, lasting between one and two hours, were more in the form of reasoning sessions since all group members participated together. Information from this aspect of the investigation also served to highlight the wide variety of interpretations of the Rastafarian belief system that are operative in the movement. The content of these informal interviews concentrated on issues concerning repatriation, the status of women, views on birth control, abortion, legalization of marijuana, and aspects of the Rastafarian lifestyle ('livity').

Access to the Rastafarian community in Vancouver was facilitated by my long-standing familiarity in the community and through contacts with other Rastafarians which were developed prior to the beginning of this study. Access to Rastafarian musicians was promoted by the cooperation of concert promoters such as Perryscope enterprises.

Information from all these sources served to supplement the results of this thesis. Moreover, these findings also contributed to a more thorough understanding of the social reality of the Rastafarians.

Chapter Sequence

The first chapter traces the historical evolution of the Rastafarian movement, outlining the various events that occurred and their impact on the development of the Rastafarian tradition. This chapter also includes detailed descriptions of the Rastafarian belief system, and key aspects of the Rastafarian 'livity' or lifestyle. Rastafarian attitudes towards death, nature, and the position of women within the movement are also examined. This chapter draws information from various studies conducted on the movement.

The following substantive chapter provides a critical review of the literature on the Rastafarians, bringing to light the drawbacks and shortcomings of the various studies. Current conceptualizations of the Rastafarian movement are also discussed. A critical survey of the literature on the typologies of religious organizations follows, demonstrating the inaccurate description of the Rastafarian movement as a 'cult'. In addition, a survey of this body of literature also leads into a description of the concepts utilized in this thesis. In particular, the religious types of organizations discussed are the cult, sect, and the mystic collectivity. The chapter concludes with a note discussing the use of ideal types.

Chapter three entitled 'The Mystic Collectivity of the Rastafarians' assesses the utility of this concept in relation to aspects of the Rastafarian tradition discussed in chapter

one. The concept of the mystic collectivity is discussed in some detail, relating it to the Troeltschean concept of mystical religion and the concept of social collectivities. Common denominators operative in the Rastafarian movement are discussed at some length, demonstrating their relationship with the features of the mystic collectivity.

A subsection of this chapter deals with some of the groups extant in the Rastafarian movement. These include the Order of the Nyahbinghi as approaching the ideal type of Revolutionist sect, the Bobo Shantis which approximate to the ideal type of Introversionist sect, the Twelve Tribes of Israel which can be described in terms of a local cult, and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church which has substantial number of Rastafarian members, and which has an organizational type approximating to that of a denomination. Groups espousing a different orientation are also treated in this section. In particular, the Rastafarian Movement Association is discussed in terms of its politically inclined interpretation of Rastafarianism.

Chapter four deals with the rapid growth and spread of the Rastafarian movement. Such factors as the loose organization of the movement, its lack of a de facto leader, its internal system of communication, and its emphasis on face-to-face interactions are discussed. In addition, the chapter also discusses, at some length, the appeal of the Rastafarian tradition and the various needs of the membership that it satisfies. External factors contributing to the emergence of Rastafarianism in various

social contexts are also discussed. The chapter concludes with a comparative analysis of the differences between the various forms of Jah, i. e. the various organizations and patterns that have evolved which draw from the Rastafarian tradition. The variants of Rastafarianism compared in some detail are the English form of the movement and its Canadian counterpart. This chapter demonstrates the interaction between different variables such as the needs of the membership, the socioeconomic and cultural factors present in society, and the availability of Rastafarian themes and concepts as being the determining factors shaping the emergence and form of Rastafarianism in varying social contexts.

The concluding chapter of this thesis recapitulates the issues addressed in the various chapters. The separate variables are examined in relation to each other in order to illustrate how the structure of the movement, its belief system, and the articulation of its theology lead to a generation of competing interpretations and to the formation of collective expressions of these specific interpretations. In addition, the varying forms and functions of the Rastafarian movement are summarized, demonstrating that within the total over-arching structure of the mystic collectivity of the Rastafarians, other types of religious organizations are extant and serve various functions. This section concludes with an examination of the possible routes of the future development of the Rastafarian tradition.

In conclusion, this thesis is intended as a potential contribution to the existing body of literature on the Rastafarian movement, and to the literature in the sociology of religion dealing with the typologies of religious organizations. On a theoretical level, this thesis demonstrates the utility of the hitherto virtually unutilized concept of the mystic collectivity in furthering analysis, and it is hoped, understanding, of the Rastafarian movement.

II. The Rastafarian Movement: Its History and Belief System

The genesis of the Rastafarian movement can be traced to the early 1930's. Jamaica, at this time, was plagued with severe economic crisis brought on by the world wide depression. Politically, the island was still ruled by the British in the form of a crown colony. The 'plantocracy' was still in power and occupied the upper echelons of the social order, while the masses of blacks were left to fend for themselves - primarily in the ghettos. Emancipation had technically freed the former slaves from the drudgery and toil of field work, but at the same time, the racism and discrimination rampant on the island combined with the lack of any form of social welfare, aggravated the overall condition of the black population. The former slaves had no alternative but to squat on abandoned plantations or crowd into the ghettos. Increased concentration of the population in such urban centres as Kingston accentuated the situation even further (Hurvitz and Hurvitz, 1971).

It was in these conditions that the seeds of Rastafarianism were sown. The socio-economic conditions of the black masses had fostered the growth of a number of potential avenues by which to counter the increasing sense of alienation and misery. A primary outlet for the frustrations experienced by these masses was religion. The religious milieu in Jamaica, at this time, was permeated by a wide variety of religious groups ranging from

Christian based groups such as the Baptists and Anglicans, to the more Afro-Christian syncretistic groups such as the Bedwardites, Revivalists, Zion Coptics, Convince, and Pocomania. Included in this range of religious groups were the more occult oriented African religions such as Obeah, Myal and Vodun (Barrett, 1968, 1977). Beginning in the mid 1920's, the ideology of Ethiopianism was also prevalent in Jamaica. The latter promulgated the ideas of black supremacy, a black messiah, and Ethiopia as a haven for all blacks (Hill, 1983). Millenarian sentiments were already in circulation through the teachings of Bedward, the Israelites, and the proponents of Ethiopianism (Barrett, 1968, Simpson, 1955a, 1955b).

It was in this cultural milieu that Marcus Garvey began preaching his humanitarian beliefs, attempting to raise the consciousness of the blacks. Through his powers of oratory, Garvey was able to articulate in biblical language all the elements of Ethiopianism such as black supremacy and African repatriation. Garvey stressed the superiority of black civilizations. According to Garvey, the time had come for the blacks to regain a sense of racial pride and to start peceiving God as being black. This theme is clearly apparent in the following passage written by Garvey on the subject of God:

We, as negroes, have found a new ideal. Whilst our God has no colour, yet it is human to see everything through one's own spectacles, and since the white people have seen their God though White spectacles, we have only now started out (late though it may be) to see our God through our own spectacles. The God of Isaac and the God of Jacob let him exist for the race that believe in the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. We negroes believe in

the God of Ethiopia, the everlasting God - God the son, God the holy Ghost, the one God of all ages. That is the God in whom we believe, but we shall worship him through the spectacles of Ethiopia. (Barrett, 1977:77).

The Rastafarians view Marcus Garvey as a prophet, claiming that his role is analogous to that of John the Baptist in announcing the coming of Christ. The Rastafarians claim that Garvey was the prophet who pointed to Africa, and prophesized the coming of a black king. The prophecy, "Look to Africa, when a Black King shall be crowned, for the day of deliverance is near", is attributed to Marcus Garvey by all Rastafarians (Kitzinger, 1969:245). However, recent findings indicate that rather than Garvey, a Reverend James Morris Web is also reported to have stated a similar message in his address to a congregation in 1924 (Hill, 1983:25). Nevertheless, Garvey still remains a prophet to the Rastafarians, even though Garvey himself denounced all such groups as the Rastafarians and the Bedwardites as eccentric and deviant.

When Ras Tafari Haile Selassie was crowned Emperor of Ethiopia in 1930, and took the titles of 'Lord of Lords, King of Kings, the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, 225th in line of succession, direct descendent of Solomon and Sheba, and the Root of David', some Jamaican Garveyites saw this as the fulfillment of prophecy. Some Jamaicans, notably Leonard Howell, Joseph Hibbert, Archibald Dunkley, Robert Hinds, Paul Earlinton, Vernal Davis and Ferdinand Ricketts soon became pioneers of a new religion as they circulated around the island preaching their new found revelation and belief in the Emperor

Haile Selassie. It is interesting to note that all these individuals arrived at this interpretation independently, especially considering that all had markedly varying religious backgrounds. Aside from Howell, Hibbert and Dunkley, the Rastafarian literature does not contain much in the nature of biographical information on the other founders of the Rastafarian tradition. Thus, the beginnings of the Rastafarian movement can be located in the early 1930's which heralded the coronation of the first black monarch to be recognized by the world.

Although the 'pioneers' converged on the basic premise that Haile Selassie was the returned Christ and thus was the divine saviour, their paths diverged on other issues. Joseph Hibbert, who had been working in Costa Rica, returned to Jamaica in 1931 and began preaching the early Rastafarian doctrine in the rural areas surrounding the city of Kingston. In Costa Rica, Hibbert had been a member of the Ancient Order of Ethiopia, a Masonic society, and he proceeded to infuse masonic teachings into the early Rastafarian doctrine. Hibbert viewed Haile Selassie as the returned Christ, negating the competing belief that the Emperor was the Godhead. In 1932, Hibbert formed the Ethiopian Coptic Faith organization, the services of which were based on an extensive use of the Saint Sosimas Ethiopian bible (McPherson, 1980).


Leonard Howell, a former Garveyite, returned to Jamaica in 1932 after an extensive sojourn in the United States. Amongst

the early founders of Rastafarianism, Howell was the most widely travelled. In fact, Howell claimed to have been in Ethiopia at the time of Haile Selassie's coronation. Furthermore, according to Barrett's sources (1968), Howell is said to have fought in the Ashanti wars in West Africa, presumably on the side of the British. Howell was also known to be fluent in several West African dialects. In the subsequent history of the movement, Howell played the most significant role. In 1933, Archibald Dunkley formed the King of Kings Mission, an alternate organization to that of Hibbert's. Thereafter, a number of other organizations appeared in Jamaica, all espousing variants of the Rastafarian doctrine.

To substantiate their new found 'truth', the founders of the Rastafarian movement drew supportive tracts from a variety of sources connected with Ethiopianism, Garveyism, the bible - both the King James version and the Ethiopian Amharic text, the 'Holy Piby' or 'Black Man's Bible' written by Robert Athlyi Rogers in 1924, and a Jamaican publication - the 'Royal Parchment Scroll of Black Supremacy' written by a Reverend Fitz Balintine Pettersburgh in 1926 (Hill, 1983). The most significant Rastafarian text to emerge in this period was the 'Promised Key' written by Howell and published in the Gold Coast. This text contains material which is by and large taken from the 'Holy Piby', and is full of references to the divinity of Haile Selassie and ideas of black supremacy (Hill, 1983).

With the seeds of Ethiopianism, black supremacy, and African repatriation as sown by Marcus Garvey, the work of Howell, Hibbert, Dunkley and others soon became the nurturing fertilizer which facilitated the growth of what was to become the Rastafarian movement. Some of the biblical passages which formed the Rastafarian exegesis were the following:

Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God. (Psalm 68:31).



And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice: who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth,...., was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.... And one of the leaders saith unto me, weep not: Behold the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. (Revelations 5:2-5).

For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am Black; astonishment hath taken hold of me. (Jeremiah 8:21).

And I beheld till the thrones were cast down and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was White as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. (Daniel 7:9).

I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Keder, as the Curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me because I am black, because the sun has looked upon me... , His head is of the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven. (Song of Solomon, 1:5-6, 5:11).

Revelation 19:16 forms the most vital part of the Rastafarian exegesis.

And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS, and LORD OF LORDS.

In addition to the above, the following biblical passages are also used by the Rastafarians to support their

interpretation of Haile Selassie as the divine messiah and as the personification of God: Daniel 3:24-25, Ezekial 30, Timothy 6, Revelation 17, and Isaiah 43 (Barrett, 1968, 1977, Cashmore, 1979, Hill, 1983, Nicholas, 1979, and Owens, 1976). The translation of the Emperor's name into English also forms a crucial part of the Rastafarian exegesis. Ras Tafari, in English, can be translated to mean head creator. Haile Selassie, when translated in English, is the power of the trinity. According to the Rastafarians, the very name of the Emperor indicates his divine status (Barrett, 1977, Nicholas, 1979, Owens, 1976).

Over the course of time, biblical language and world-view became the principal tools for the reconstruction of a Rastafarian reality. World events as well as local upheavals were interpreted through this world-view. The motifs of black supremacy, repatriation, and the divinity of Haile Selassie were embroidered into the biblical tapestry that was the Rastafarian reality. However, apart from these three fundamental precepts of Rastafarianism, variations in interpretations existed even at this time. The root of the differences in interpretations lay in the contrasting religious backgrounds of Howell, Hibbert and Dunkley. This became apparent when the different organizations such as the King of Kings Mission, the Ethiopian Coptic Faith, and the Ethiopian Salvation Society came into existence. The major differences in these early organizations stemmed from the individualistic approaches of their leaders. Hibbert, for

example, infused some of his masonic learning into the early precepts of Rastafarianism. Similarly, Dunkley recognized the divinity of Haile Selassie as the returned Christ but not as the Godhead. Even Howell's interpretation differed as a result of his previous religious training and his exposure to other religious groups through his travels. In fact, Howell was particularly influenced by an East Indian man (Laloo) who was his constant companion in Jamaica. The extent of this Indian influence on Howell is apparent from his title of Gangun Guru Maragh, meaning supreme Guru or teacher, which Howell took on at his commune Pinnacle (Hill, 1983, McPherson, 1982).

The movement first gained impetus in the slum areas of Kingston. There are several reasons for this rapid spread of Rastafarianism in the most economically depressed area of Jamaica. According to Barrett (1968), a major reason for the growth of the movement at this time was the general apathy of the masses to the more established Christian churches such as the Anglicans and Roman Catholics. These churches primarily served the interests of the ruling classes, and thus represented the colonizing powers. The priests and ministers were from England or Scotland, and conducted the services in a fashion which was alien to the blacks. Amongst the lower classes, the most popular religious groups were the Revivalists and the Bedwardites (Chevannes, 1971). However, during the late 1930's and early 1940's the popularity of these groups waned considerably. Chevannes (1971) suggests that this decline in

numbers created a 'psychological gap' which was then fulfilled by Rastafarianism. Essentially, this 'gap' resulted from the disillusionment suffered by the Bedwardites when their leader, Bedward, failed to ascend to heaven on a chariot of fire. This disenchantment reached a high point with Bedward's untimely death. The Revivalists were also losing adherents as a function of other variables, the most notable being the increasing pressure exerted on them by the establishment, which resulted in a marked decline of political activity within the group (Chevannes, 1971).

The initial success of the movement in the urban centre of Kingston can also be understood in light of the conditions of the blacks in this area. The most infamous area of Kingston, comprising the major ghetto area was the 'Dungle'. Kitzinger (1969) offers the following description of this area:

The largest number of Rasta known dwellings is concentrated on Government owned wasteland, where the Rastafari are squatters in wood hovels, the shells of old car bodies, and lean-tos composed of asbestos, cardboard and planks from packing cases and crates from Kingston harbour. In Kingston, many Rastas live on the site of a former swamp reclaimed by tipping the filth from the city refuse carts into the holes, so turning it into a vast and mosquito-infested rubbish dump. Here they have erected their shacks, forming what looks at first sight like a mad jungle of dwellings - with children, starving dogs, fowls, and flies swarming everywhere. On the Foreshore Road alone, a sprawling shanty town which has achieved some notoriety near the harbour, a Rasta informant told me that there live 1000 children, but since births are rarely registered, this is impossible to check. (Kitzinger, 1969:241).

There were no basic amenities available in this area. Violence was rife, usually stemming from domestic quarrels and from gang

warfare. When all avenues to social and economic mobility are barred to a particular group (as the blacks in Jamaica), the subculture in question often attempts to create other means by which to attain social rewards or reclaim a sense of status. Psychologically, Rastafarianism became an important source by which racial pride and dignity could be attained. Where the physical surroundings afforded little in terms of dignity and status, affiliation to the movement through the belief of being one of the elect of God imputed a sense of status to the deprived (Lewis, 1958). It is not surprising then, that Rastafarianism spread so quickly amongst the lower classes.

It is interesting to note that while all the preaching was done in the rural areas around Kingston, it was in the urban centre that the Rastafarian faith gained momentum, and, contrary to Barrett's (1977) information, it was in the ghettos that the doctrine of Rastafarianism actually began to take shape (McPherson, 1982, 1983). For example, it was in the ghettos that the highly specific drumming rituals of the Rastafarians evolved. Similarly, the practice of wearing dreadlocks and the consumption of marijuana also originated from the Rastafarians who populated the ghettos. Even the early organizations were located in Kingston (McPherson, 1982, 1983).¹

¹ Everton S.P. McPherson is the only Rastafarian studying the movement from a historical perspective and employing as his methodology the use of oral tradition amongst the Rastafarians. Because of his identity as a Rastafarian and his fluent command of the Jamaican creole as well as the Rastafarian argot, he has been able to gather original data which has so far been inaccessible to other scholars studying the Rastafarian movement.

While the Rastafarian movement, in its nascent stages, gained popularity in the urban areas of Kingston, by the late 1930's and early 1940's it had shifted in concentration to the rural areas. This shift in location was due partly to Howell who had an organization called the Ethiopian Salvation Society. The latter was affiliated to its parent organization in the United States. With proceeds from this organization, primarily through membership fees etc., Howell acquired an abandoned estate in Sligoville near the hills of St. Catherine. Here he set up a communal type of religious organization called Pinnacle. the choice of a rural location for the commune was motivated in part by the persecution suffered by the Rastafarians in Kingston. This persecution was directed on the brethren by the police and other agents of social control (Barrett, 1968, 1977, McPherson, 1982, Smith, Augier and Nettleford, 1960).

Aside from Howell's group of Rastafarians, other elders of the movement also moved to the surrounding hills, and into the interior of the island. Prior to the setting up of Pinnacle, Howell had been imprisoned a number of times for preaching sedition. In 1933, Howell was arrested on the grounds of the anti-establishment and racist rhetoric of his speeches. In addition to this, Howell had also been selling photographs of Haile Selassie at a shilling each, claiming that they were to be the passports to Ethiopia. He alleged that a ship would arrive on August 1st, 1934 to take the people en masse to Ethiopia

' (cont'd)

(Barrett, 1977). Howell apparently sold about five thousand photographs, which reflects the popularity of the movement at this stage in its history. An examination of Howell's articulation of Rastafarian beliefs demonstrates the general nature of the belief system at this time in its history. Barrett (1977) identifies the following principles of Rastafarianism as conveyed in Howell's speeches.

(1) Hatred for the White race; (2) the complete superiority of the Black race; (3) revenge on the Whites for their wickedness; (4) the negation, persecution and humiliation of the government and legal bodies of Jamaica; and (6) acknowledging Haile Selassie as the supreme being and only ruler of the Black people. (1977:85).

This exemplifies the rebellious and violent direction the movement was taking. To some extent, the sentiments present in these principles can be traced to the evolution of black consciousness in Jamaica. The racial polarization between the blacks and whites can be better understood when placed in the historical context of slavery and colonialism. Jamaica did not achieve its independence until 1962. At the time of Howell's speeches, British domination in Jamaica was quite evident in the form of governmental jurisdiction and appointments, and appropriation of prime land by British landlords who were for the most part absent.

The task of running the plantations of these absentee land lords was undertaken by the overseers who were often very cruel and unbending taskmasters, as it was their duty to turn out profits and thus ensure their employment (Hurvitz and Hurvitz,

1971). The majority of the blacks in Jamaica are the descendents of the slaves who worked on these plantations. The memory of slavery is still fresh in their minds. The identification of whites with oppression continues to this day in some parts of Jamaica. The famous Rastafarian cry - 'death to all black and white oppressors' is an echo of Paul Bogle's appeal to his fellowmen to rise up and fight the white masters.²

While Howell was setting up the communitarian based Pinnacle, other developments were occurring amongst the Rastafarians residing in the ghettos of Kingston. The most significant of these developments was the formation of the House of the Youth Black Faith by leading Rastafarians such as Ras Boanerges, Phillip Panhandle, Breda Arthur and others, some of whom became recognized elders of the movement at a later stage (McPherson, 1980, 1983). The significance of this new organization was its later development into the Order of the Nyahbinghi, and its major influence in shaping Rastafarian doctrine and practices. It was the House of the Youth Black Faith that was instrumental in formulating the Rastafarian practice of wearing dreadlocks, specific dietary laws, and in general Rastafarian attitudes concerning the role of women, conceptions of death, marriage etc. Though the Rastafarian practices of wearing dreadlocks and the sacramental use of marijuana were initiated by the House of the Youth Black Faith,

² Paul Bogle is a Jamaican national hero who was one of the key figures involved in the Morant Bay Rebellion in 1865 when a major revolt occurred in Jamaica. (Hurvitz and Hurvitz, 1971).

these practices became common in virtually all Rastafarian groups and communes. Even Howell's followers at Pinnacle put some of these Rastafarian precepts into practice.

Pinnacle, was to some degree, a 'state within a state' (Barrett, 1977). The authorities were for some time completely unaware of its existence. It was not until July 1941, that the police raided the commune and arrested seventy Rastafarians. The Pinnacle put into practice the foundations of Rastafarianism, embedding them into the lifestyle of the adherents. Rituals, rites and practices developed in the ghettos thus found full expression in the commune. Most of Howell's followers had come from the ghettos. However, Howell's adherents, for the most part, refrained from the tradition of wearing dreadlocks. The only 'dreadlocked' Rastafarians were the guards who identified themselves with Ethiopian warriors (Barrett, 1977). The Rastafarians, until this time, had just worn beards which served to differentiate them from other Jamaicans. The practice of wearing dreadlocks, which are formed by not combing the hair, was legitimized by the biblical passages dealing with the vows of the Nazarenes and the levitical orders in the bible. According to Barrett (1977), this practice was an offshoot of some Rastafarians emulating the hair styles of East African tribesmen whose pictures they had come across. While this may be the case, it seems more likely that the wearing of deadlocks became a symbol of identification for the Rastafarians by which they could separate themselves from the mainstream of Jamaican

society. Moreover dreadlocks, because of their unkempt appearance, incited a feeling of dread and awe amongst the local people. For the Rastafarians, the dreadlocks reflected the 'dread and terrible majesty of Jah' (McPherson, 1982, 1983).³

Pinnacle collapsed after Howell's imprisonment which was based on the charges of the cultivation of a dangerous drug (marijuana), and disorderly conduct. However, after Howell's release from prison in 1943, Pinnacle resumed its existence. During this period, Hibbert had formed another organization which was the Jamaican branch of the Ethiopian Mystic Masons (McPherson, 1980). In 1954, the forces of law finally broke up the Pinnacle commune. This time, one hundred and sixty three members were arrested on charges of violence and the cultivation of marijuana. The commune was destroyed and the Rastafarians flooded into the slums of Kingston. Howell, by now believing himself to be divine, was committed to a mental hospital in Kingston, where he is said to have spent the rest of his life (Barrett, 1977).

The Pinnacle, while in existence, had served several vital functions. It had created a cohesive ingroup atmosphere which in turn sustained a specific Rastafarian culture and lifestyle. The Pinnacle, in a sense, had fostered the development of a distinctive pattern of life based on a body of beliefs. When a group isolates itself and is surrounded by hostile forces, it

³ 'Jah' stands for a shortened form of 'Jehovah' - the God of the Judeo-Christian tradition. For the Rastafarians, Jah also represents Haile Selassie as the personification of God.

will very likely develop differences which serve to act as demarcating boundary lines differentiating the group from the mainstream of society. These 'created differences' may take many forms, and amongst the Rastafarians these differences took the form of specific rites and rituals. By heightening these differences, the Rastafarians were also conveying their message of rebellion and protest against established Jamaican society. In defiance of traditional norms, the Rastafarians maintained their long dreadlocks and their consumption of ganja (marijuana). They refused to marry in churches and defied other social laws and conventions. In contrast to other Jamaicans, the Rastafarians stressed their African heritage and attempted to emulate in all aspects of their life, the little they knew of African culture. This was in direct opposition to the emphasis on English norms and conventions which permeated mainstream Jamaican society (Barrett, 1968, 1977, Kitzinger, 1969, McPherson, 1982, 1983, and Simpson, 1955a, 1955b).

It was in these conditions that the Rastafarian movement was born. With the emphasis on black supremacy, racial pride and dignity, combined with the concomitant belief in a black God and the repatriation of all blacks to their ancestral homeland, Rastafarianism provided one viable mechanism by which to restore the blacks' identity (Nettleford, 1972). To the establishment, the Rastafarian movement was clearly a threat. The Rastafarians refused to cooperate with the government on several issues such as participating in censuses, voting and in terms of their

general attitude of hostility to society. This is not to say that the bretheren were violent in any way or engaged in large scale subversive activities, rather, it was their refusal to comply with laws regarding the cultivation and use of marijuana, and their denial of their Jamaican citizenship that angered the authorities and resulted in their increased persecution.

In the early history of the movement, several important events occurred with the result of fortifying group solidarity. One of these was the formation of the commune Pinnacle. The second was Howell's prophetic announcement concerning the date of repatriation (1934). The third major event was the 1958 Universal Rastafarian convention. It took place in Jamaica and provided an impetus for all (Jamaican) Rastafarians to get together and perform common rites and rituals. More importantly, the convention spurred yet another attempt towards repatriation. Claudius Henry, a Jamaican Rastafarian, perceived himself to be the Black Moses who would lead his brethren out of exile to the promised land. Styling himself as the Repairer of the Breach, Henry set about distributing thousands of cards bearing the following message:

Pioneering Israel's scattered children of African origin "back home to Africa". This year 1959, deadline Oct. 5th; this new government is God's righteous Kingdom of Everlasting Peace on Earth. "Creations Second Birth." Holder of this certificate is requested to visit the headquarters at 18 Rosalie Avenue... August 1st 1959 for our Emancipation Jubilee, commencing 9 a.m. sharp. Please reserve this certificate for removal. No passport will be necessary for those returning to Africa etc. We sincerely, the Seventh Emmanuel's Brethren gathering Israel's scattered and anointed prophet, Rev. C.V. Henry, R.B. Given this 2nd day of March 1959, in the

year of the reign of his Imperial Majesty, 1st Emperor of Ethiopia, "God's elect", Haile Selassie, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Israel's Returned Messiah. (Barrett, 1977:96).

The response to this certificate was enormous. Claudius Henry was able to sell close to fifteen hundred of these certificates, which demonstrates the extent to which repatriation was viewed as an impending reality. Hundreds of people sold their possessions and congregated at Henry's headquarters on the appointed day. As is common with most self-styled prophets, when prophecy fails, a popular strategy is to extend the deadline. Claudius Henry attempted to do this, but when the ships failed to materialize, bringing the imminent dream of repatriation to a halt, Henry denied ever having suggested repatriation as a reality. He was apprehended by the authorities and penalized for his part in the affair (Barrett, 1968, 1977, McPherson, 1980).

The sixties saw the Rastafarian movement struggling between the policies of co-optation and containment initiated by the government (Albuquerque, 1976). Essentially, these policies began as a result of the 1960 report on the Rastafarian movement which was published by three sociologists under the aegis of the University College of the West Indies. Until the 1960's, the Rastafarians had a very negative public image in Jamaica. Not only were they strange to look at, but they were also perceived to be violent, dirty and mad; a perception strengthened on the part of the public by the publicity attached to the Rastafarians' use of marijuana as a sacrament, and the political

fiasco created by Claudius Henry and his son Ronald Henry. The latter event came to public attention when Henry was discovered to be concealing arms and a treasonous letter to Fidel Castro inviting the latter to assume political power in Jamaica. The seriousness of the incident was magnified by the discovery of Ronald Henry's premeditated attempt to initiate a coup d'etat on the island. A state of emergency was declared and a concentrated search for Henry and his accomplices was undertaken. Witnesses had testified that Ronald Henry had been seen drilling a group of Rastafarians. After several days of searching, Ronald Henry and his American accomplices were seized. The impact of this incident left its mark on the government's subsequent treatment of the Rastafarians. Moreover, the movement suffered persecution from the public and the media (Barrett, 1977, Chevannes, 1971).

In order to counter their negative image, the leading brethren of the Rastafarian movement approached the then head of the University College of the West Indies, and requested that a study of the movement be undertaken so as to enlighten the public on the true nature of its belief system and its lifestyle. Three sociologists, M. G. Smith, R. Augier, and R. Nettleford were assigned to the task. Their research culminated in a short report to the government and the people of Jamaica. The report (1960), which was also published in the Jamaican newspaper the Daily Gleaner, outlined the history of the movement and its religious belief system. The report also made several recommendations to the government requesting that more

civilized living quarters and basic amenities be made available to the Rastafarians. The overall impact of this report was a positive one. It opened the public's eyes to the true nature and plight of the Rastafarians. The report also advocated immediate measures on the part of the government to inquire into the possibilities of repatriation (Smith, Augier and Nettleford, 1960).

The report provided the impetus to send a mission to Africa. The composition of delegates in this first mission included both official members representing the government and leading Rastafarians. This mission left for Africa in 1961 and visited several African countries including Ethiopia. Albuquerque (1977) has analyzed the politics involved in this mission. According to him, the mission was supported by the government for two major reasons. Firstly, it served to create dissension in the Rastafarian community by creating competition amongst the brethren as to which of them should be selected. Secondly, the mission in one sense forced the Rastafarians to compromise repatriation en masse for rehabilitation and migration. Several Rastafarian groups voiced their dissatisfaction over this issue, claiming in the first instance that the movement had only one leader - Haile Selassie, who when the right time came would send for them. Further, the Rastafarians of some leading groups such as Chruch Triumphant - a militant arm of the Youth Black Faith, realized the underlying ploy of the government in trying to contain the movement by

introducing rehabilitation measures within the Rastafarian community (McPherson, 1983).

The other major event which also served to create a sense of unity amongst the Rastafarians was the Emperor's visit to Jamaica in 1966. This state visit drew throngs of Rastafarians from all parts of the island. The event was a memorable one for all Rastafarians. They came in great numbers with their Ethiopian flags and other Rastafarian paraphernalia and settled themselves on the airstrip. It was a rainy day with clouds heavy in the sky. However, as soon as the plane landed, the sun suddenly shone. To the Rastafarians, this was yet another sign of Haile Selassie's divinity. All the Rastafarians rushed towards the plane breaking security lines in the process. There was such a commotion near the plane that the Emperor himself, having stepped out momentarily, promptly withdrew and did not emerge from the plane for another half hour. In the meantime, officials recruited an influential Rastafarian, Mortimo Planno, who quietened down the mob, allowing the Emperor to be led away. In the course of the emperor's visit, many leading Rastafarians were invited to banquets and other official functions, and were given time and opportunity to converse with the Emperor (Barrett, 1968, 1977, Rastafari Speaks, 1983:10).

According to Barrett (1977), the Emperor's visit initiated a process of routinization within the movement. This was anchored in the change of attitude experienced by the members after the Emperor's visit. The brethren claim that Haile

Selassie instructed them to first liberate the blacks in Jamaica, and then to seek repatriation. Thus, the motto changed from that of repatriation, specifically Marcus Garvey's cry 'Africa for the Africans, at home and abroad', to that of 'liberation before repatriation'. This indicates that the shift in attitude would necessarily lead to a situation where the millennial fervour of the movement would be siphoned off into active participation in Jamaican society with the end goal of raising the consciousness of all blacks in that society. To an extent, this has happened in Jamaica primarily with the growth of the movement amongst middle-class university students. Yet, the dream of repatriation continues to exist, especially in the minds of the elders (Albuquerque, 1977).

Since the 1961 government sponsored mission to Africa, many other missions have been sent from Jamaica to various African countries. However, the membership of the delegations has varied. While most of these missions have included one or more members from the government, there have been other missions which have been comprised exclusively of Rastafarians and been funded by individual Rastafarians. These have formed the unofficial attempts on the part of the Rastafarian community to examine the feasibility of repatriation. The findings of most of these missions reflect on the potential problems involved in large scale repatriation of Jamaicans to various parts of Africa. The major problems are firstly, the lack of adequate financial funding to transport the Rastafarians to Africa. Some

Rastafarian groups are actively lobbying the Jamaican government, and other international bodies such as the United Nations, for financial resources to fund repatriation. They base their demands on the fact that they were forcibly brought to Jamaica during the slave trade, and should therefore be repatriated on humanitarian grounds.

Yet, aside from this problem of funding, the question of repatriation also hinges on the African countries reception of the Rastafarians. Several African officials visiting Jamaica, have made it clear to the Rastafarians that their countries require skilled and educated persons. The Rastafarians, by and large, are unskilled and semi-educated. Hence, their chances for repatriation, through such official channels as immigration, remains very slight. However, the more militant and religious groups within the movement reject any notion of this type of repatriation through official channels. Their concept of repatriation is centred entirely on a messianic vision of Haile Selassie as coming to lead his Jamaican children out of bondage to Zion (Albuquerque, 197, McPherson, 1983). This religious arm of the movement even rejects the attitude of 'liberation before repatriation'. The following extract from an interview with a leading elder of the Rastafarian community in Jamaica, depicts this religious interpretation of repatriation. The interviewer, a Mr. Hugh Morrison, is questioning Ras Boanerges about the latter's meetings with visiting Africans in Jamaica.

Morrison: '...Now have you been able to speak to many Africans?'

Boa: 'Not abroad, in Jamaica.'

Morrison: 'You have met them? (Yes) Can you tell me the names of those you have met?'

Boa: 'Oh... they all are called Ras Tafari'.

Morrison: 'Oh yes. Yes...But what about those who come just two weeks, three weeks, a month, from Africa? We have visitors all the time from Africa. Do you ever go and talk with them?'

Boa: 'No. (Why?) For there is many diplomat within the world.'

Morrison: 'And you believe that an African if he came to Jamaica might not be a good African?'

Boa: 'I would also bring you back to remembrance of what happened just a couple of nights ago... somewhere last week. One brother by the name of King came here.'

Morrison: 'You mean he came from Ghana.'

Boa: And he spoke at the library up by Tom Redcam Avenue. And I have heard his wordical operation that he gave unto the people and it was 'nt acceptable unto I'. (Note the first person).

Morrison: 'Why wasn't it acceptable?'

Boa: 'For he spoke of an immigrant, and we does not deal upon immigrants. We deal upon repatriation. We deal upon the Ransom of Israel by moral laws of almighty God.'

Morrison: 'So because he talked about immigrants you are not willing? Suppose he were to offer you a place in Ghana, you would 'nt take it because he used the wrong word?'

Boa: 'If he were of my place in Africa, he would speak as an African. but he speak as a traitor of Israel'.
(Barrett, 1968:139).

For the Rastafarians, the belief in repatriation is also fuelled by the knowledge of the Emperor's land grant of five hundred acres to the people of the West who aided Ethiopia in her trying period with the Italian invasion. * Their belief in repatriation is also strengthened by the verbal report of one

* This land grant was also available to the blacks in Jamaica who were affiliated with the Ethiopian World Federation locals. One of the founding members of Rastafarianism, Paul Earlington was instrumental in setting up a branch of the Ethiopian World Federation in Jamaica in 1938. While the organization itself was affiliated to its parent organization in the United States, the Rastafarians constituted the majority of its membership in Jamaica, and also permeated EWF functions and meetings with their particular rhetoric and style (Cashmore, 1979).

Rastafarian, who was a member in the 1961 mission which also visited Ethiopia. According to Ras Douglas Mack, the Emperor sent the following message to the Rastafarians in Jamaica:

Tell the Brethren be not dismayed, I personally will give my assistance in the matter of their repatriation. I want not only men but women and children. I do not want you to suffer any difficulties. It will take some time for careful study or planning. (Barrett, 1968:139).

The Emperor's reaction to the Rastafarians remains ambiguous to the public and researchers of the movement. While Haile Selassie never publicly announced his divinity, he has also never denied the divine status attributed to him by the Rastafarians. However, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church elite in Jamaica and England, have constantly warned the Rastafarians against interpreting the role of the Emperor in this manner (Cashmore, 1979, McPherson, 1983). There is only one account of the Emperor's indirect acceptance of the divine status attributed to him by the Rastafarians, and even this remains a dubious source of information. This account was published in a student newspaper which featured an account of Haile Selassie's visit to Jamaica. According to the author of this article, the Emperor is reputed to have said that most of the people present at the official reception were unaware of his true identity and status (McPherson, 1982).

The late fifties and the decade of the sixties were a period of increasing publicity and recognition of the Rastafarians. Prior to the 1960 report, only two studies of the movement were available to researchers. However, the 1960 report

generated a number of other studies dealing with various aspects of the movement. The increasing number of published studies of the Rastafarian movement served to change the public's image of the Rastafarians. From the government's perspective, the movement was potentially dangerous especially if mobilized by a revolutionary ethic and leader. As a result, the government made several attempts to co-opt the movement by inviting brethren to participate in official functions such as the Emperor's state visit. The government also attempted to provide cheap housing and other amenities to the brethren.

Rastafarian art, music, dance and general lifestyle were increasingly brought to public attention. The Daily Gleaner, Jamaica's leading newspaper, also printed a variety of articles dealing with the movement, including a serialized version of the 1960 report. Yet the movement continued to be persecuted by the authorities. Informers were present in most of the Rastafarian camps and meetings. 'Back O'Wall', one of the primary gathering areas of the Rastafarians and also a ghetto, was totally destroyed in 1965 through 'Operation Shantytown' (Barrett, 1968, personal communication, Jamaica, July, 1983). This was a retaliatory action on the part of the government. Countless other incidents have been noted where brethren have suffered humiliation by having their locks forcibly cut by the police, or by being arrested on 'trumped up' charges of possession of marijuana (Barrett, 1968, McPherson, 1983, White, 1983). To some degree, this type of persecution is still in effect, especially

for Rastafarian children who suffer the same humiliating treatment in public schools (Barrett, 1977, McPherson, 1983).⁵

Yet, the Rastafarian movement continues to grow and expand within Jamaica and in other parts of the Caribbean. Barrett's (1977) estimate of the Rastafarian membership in Jamaica narrows the figure to seventy thousand. This includes sympathizers as well. More recent estimates claim that one out of every ten Jamaicans espouses the Rastafarian faith. Since the total population of Jamaica is 2.2 million, the number of Rastafarians on the basis of this estimate is quite large (approximately 220,000) (McPherson, 1983). It is difficult to assess accurately the size of the Rastafarian population given that most Rastafarians refuse to answer census questionnaires or other official population measurement devices.

⁵ Sister P's lecture at the International Rastafarian congress meeting, university of the West Indies, Jamaica, July, 1983, also raised this issue. The solution offered was to build a school for Rastafarian children which would have a curriculum that contained African oriented material. However, the major problem is funding.

The Rastafarian belief system

The Rastafarian belief system revolves around four main tenets. The basic belief is in the divinity of Haile Selassie. The following account of the belief system reveals these four main precepts. It is written by a Rastafarian intellectual in the particular linguistic style of the movement. Jabulani Tafari begins with the following assertion:

Despite any real or apparent variations, I and I held a number of precepts in common.

(a) The conviction of heart and mind that Negus-Prester Selassie I is Christ Incarnate in his Kingly character and that in this Biblical Dispensation, the Almighty Spirit of Jehovah-Elohim, the Eternal One, is first and foremost expressed through H.I.M., King of David's Greater Son, Janhoi the Lion of Judah.

(b) That the African Peoples to be found in the Western Hemisphere are the re-incarnation and descendents of the original Hebrew Israelites who were already racially mixed with Jebusites, Zemarites, Amorites, Elamites, Cushites and Nubian Egyptians, before being widely dispersed through the African Interior after the death by Crucifixion and Resurrection to everliving life of the Christed Nazarite Redeemer from Galilee almost two thousand years ago.

(c) That Continental Ethiopia (Africa in General) and, in particular, modern-day political Ethiopia (formerly Abyssinia), is part of the divine heritage of African descendants the world over, who, if so desirous, should be re-patriated to the Motherland, where their fathers loved to be. And,

(d) That Jamaica and the so-called West Indies are part of a White Western Civilization of corruption, which through the soon to resurrected European-based holy Roman Empire, represents the iniquitous Mystery, Babylon of antiquity and promotes its decadent devil-devised doctrine to the detriment of deluded mankind and which sinful Shitstem (system) will therefore be destroyed in a predestinated apocalyptic judgement of volcanic eruptions, earth-quakes, lightning bolts, brimstone, molten lava, thunder, plagues, hurricanes, drought, famine, tidal waves, hail and heat waves... in short, by

what could be described as a supernaturally controlled ecological backlash. (1980:2).

This passage clearly articulates the core beliefs of the Rastafarians. Furthermore, it elaborates on their perception of Haile Selassie as not only Christ incarnate but the divine God Himself. It is clear from the above passage that the Rastafarians also believe in an ethic of reincarnation which allows them to claim that they are the Israelites of old, and that they are the sons of God, present in the world since the beginning of creation. It is apparent from the above account that the Rastafarians view Western civilization and all its institutions as representing Babylon, the biblical 'whore' symbolizing corruption, decadence and evil. This belief permeates the Rastafarians attitude towards the state, and towards all outsiders in general. Cashmore (1979) has captured this attitude in his concept of 'Babylonian conspiracy' which the Rastafarians project on the world, and through which they perceive the wider world.

The Rastafarians firmly believe that the forces of Babylon (the western world) will suffer imminent defeat and destruction in the final judgment of God. This belief in the final Apocalypse is legitimated by the Rastafarians millennial interpretation of the bible. However, the wording of this prophecy differs amongst the different Rastafarians. In the case of the above passage, the Rastafarian author has couched this apocalyptic vision in undoubtedly modern terms, i.e. as an 'ecological backlash', thereby reflecting his intellectual

orientation and the audience he is writing for. However, the level of articulation and the depth of knowledge reflected in the passage, is not uncommon in the Rastafarian community. In fact, out of the total Jamaican population, the Rastafarians are recognized as being the most well informed, and as having a sound knowledge of world politics and history. Aside from this, the Rastafarians in Jamaica are also known as being highly articulate (Barrett, 1977, Nettleford, 1972, Yawney, 1979).

Most of the knowledge acquired by the Rastafarians, regarding their religious beliefs, is passed on through oral tradition (McPherson, 1982, 1983). However, apart from this source of information, the bible forms the second vital source of knowledge amongst the Rastafarians. Both the new and old testaments of the bible are used by the Rastafarians. Most, if not all, Rastafarian practices are legitimated by specific biblical injunctions. For example, the practice of growing their hair into dreadlocks is based on their interpretation of the Nazarene vow. Dietary laws are also supported by various passages from the bible. The following ten point moral code formulated by Ras Sam Brown highlights the nature of the Rastafarian belief system and its expression in the practice of everyday living, or what the Rastafarians term their 'livity'.

1. We strongly object to sharp implements used in the desecration of the figure of Man; e.g. trimming and shaving, tattooing of skin, and cutting of flesh.
2. We are basically vegetarians, making scant use of certain animal flesh, outlawing the use of swine's flesh in any form, shell fishes, scale-less fishes, snails etc.
3. We worship and observe no other God but Rastafari outlawing all other forms of Pagan worship yet respecting all

believers. 4. We love and respect the brotherhood of mankind, yet our first love is to the sons of Ham. 5. We disapprove and abhor utterly hate, jealousy, envy, deceit, guile, treachery etc. 6. We do not agree to the pleasures of present day society and its modern evils. 7. We are avowed to create a world of one brotherhood. 8. Our duty is to extend the hand of charity to any brother in distress, firstly for he is of the Rastafarian faith, secondly, to any human, animals, plants etc. 9. We do adhere to the ancient laws of Ethiopia. 10. Thou shall give no thought to the aid, titles, and possession that the enemy in his fear may seek to bestow on you; resolution to your purpose is the love of Rastafari. (Barrett, 1977:156)

As has been noted before, the bible is highly revered amongst the Rastafarians. In fact, one of the most common Rastafarian rituals involves reading a chapter of the bible everyday. The version most commonly read is that of King James. The Rastafarians claim, however, that King James distorted the true content of the bible partly because of his inability to translate the Amharic Ethiopian text accurately, and also as a deliberate ploy to perpetuate the suppression and oppression of the black race. So, although the bible is read and venerated, the Rastafarians only choose to read those passages that they 'intuitively' feel are correct. Clearly, the Rastafarians only read those passages that lend support and credence to their religious beliefs. This is apparent when one examines the Rastafarian exegesis in detail. To a large extent, the King James version of the bible is the most widely read because of its ready availability, and the fact that it is in English. The Rastafarians would prefer to read the Ethiopian bible which is written in Amharic. As a result, several brethren are in the process of learning the Amharic language (Barrett, 1977). Some

Amharic words are already discernible in Rastafarian prayers. However, widespread use of this language is at present non-existent, except in the services of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. This language barrier has been overcome, somewhat, by the increasing availability of an English translation of the Ethiopian text - the Kebra Negast. Access to this material has widened the theological framework of the movement, especially since the Kebra Negast provides an invaluable account of the meeting between Solomon and Sheba, and the subsequent transfer of the Ark of the Covenant from Israel to Ethiopia. This particular biblical account is of particular importance to the Rastafarians, since it is believed that the Emperor's line of descent originates from the historic meeting between Solomon and Sheba.

The Rastafarian use of biblical texts differs from their interpretations by other groups. While they pay particular attention to those passages that directly validate their belief in the Emperor Haile Selassie, other passages are also given symbolic meaning which then allows for their development into a specific Rastafarian cosmology. For example, the myth of creation is interpreted in a specific sense by the Rastafarians. According to Nicholas's (1979) account, the Rastafarians believe that creation originated with the black race. Since God is black and since He created man in His own image, it only follows that the first man to inhabit the earth would be a black man. Black woman was created simultaneously

with her male counterpart, and as his 'equal'. God commanded this pair to be fruitful and multiply to replenish the earth. The creation of Adam and Eve (progenitors of the white race) is said to have occurred after the first creation, i.e. after the black race. However, Adam and Eve were not given license to procreate which they nevertheless did, and so fell from God's grace. Adam and Eve had been created for the sole purpose of tilling the land. It is clear from this account that the Rastafarians believe in the superiority of the black race as is apparent from the reversal of roles and power positions. However, according to this account, the black race also fell from God's grace as a result of emulating the white race's evil ways. Hence, the white man's civilization symbolizes, to the Rastafarians, evil and corruption, and is therefore labelled by them as 'Babylon'. The root of the term 'Babylon' and its negative connotations are derived from Revelation 17:1-5 which gives the following description:

And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornications: And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the earth.

It is interesting to note that although the Rastafarians claim that women are 'theologically' equal to men, they still perceive the form of Babylon as a woman - a woman who represents evil, corruption, sexual promiscuity and filth. This perception of women, stemming from their role in the bible, has influenced the general Rastafarian attitude towards their women (Rowe, 1980).

The Rastafarians extend this biblical concept of Babylon to describe the corruption and evil of the Western world. Primarily, Babylon refers to the major institutions and Weltanschauung of the Western world. The Rastafarians claim that Babylon, through all these institutions, seeks to perpetuate the suppression and oppression of the black race. 'Babylon' in turn is threatened by the teachings of the Rastafarians who point the masses to the right path and to the recognition of Haile Selassie as the divine incarnation of Christ. The Rastafarians also equate Babylon with the Roman Empire. Hence, just as the Romans persecuted the Christians for their belief in Jesus, so the present day Romans persecute the Rastafarians for their belief in Haile Selassie. There are several reasons as to why the West is equated with the Roman Empire. One of the major reasons is due to the localization of power in the West. Owens (1976) presents the following account of the Rastafarian perception of the West as the Roman system:

Rome, as the continued presence of Babylon's power, is considered to be the centre of the western world, not so much as a locality, but as a system of thought and behaviour - the Rastas speak often of the 'Roman system'

or the 'Caesar system'. Rome is the headquarters of the church-state coalition which has exercised dominion over mankind for the last two millenia. It is no accident, in the brethren's view, that the Pope resides in Rome and heads his church from there. Further, it is no accident that the European Common market, that union of the most aggressive imperialist nations, was constituted by the Treaty of Rome. Not satisfied with controlling all of the white nations, Rome endeavours to maintain its rule over the whole world, thus running directly counter to Selassie's claims of sovereignty. (Owens, 1976:71).

The Rastafarians, also claim that the Roman system attempts to lure the world into sin and corruption. The 'Romans', according to the Rastafarians, abolished the old economic system of bartering, and replaced it with a monetary system which helped to perpetuate their power. Moreover, the Romans' also advocate a belief in death and idol worshipping by stressing the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ (Owens, 1976). The Rastafarian belief system, in contrast, emphasizes life and the divinity of Haile Selassie.

Reverting to the Rastafarian interpretation of creation, there is an alternate account of the creation myth offered in Chevannes's (1971) treatment of the Rastafarians. According to this account, black men were the sons of God. They fell from God's grace by mixing with the daughters of men (the white race). Because of this transgression, the blacks have had to suffer through the acts of the white race, for example the slave trade. However, now that the blacks have atoned for their sins, the time has come for them to be repatriated and reign over the earth once more. This version incorporates the same themes as Nicholas's account, but places more emphasis on the superiority of the black race by linking it, through a patriarchal

relationship, to God the father. There are a number of other variations which differ only slightly from these two main ones. Some Rastafarians espouse the myth of creation as it is stated in the bible (Rowe, 1980).

An interesting aspect of the Rastafarian lifestyle which is derived from this account of creation is a belief in fornication as constituting a major sin. According to one Rastafarian, fornication does not just mean engaging in sexual intercourse, but rather, as having sexual relations with a person from a different race.⁶ This directly implies that any kind of exogamous relationship is considered to be sinful. The reason underlying such an interpretation is rooted in the Rastafarian belief in the superiority of the black race.

From both accounts of creation, it can be seen that the Rastafarians view their position of 'sufferation' as resulting from a previous transgression. The fact that they have now atoned for their sins through their diaspora and the subsequent suffering they have experienced, combined with the fact that they have now come to a 'Rastafarian consciousness' of their supremacy, and their acknowledgement of Haile Selassie as the incarnation of Christ, lead to their conviction of the inevitability of repatriation. However, the fact that repatriation has not occurred, although it remains an impending reality, has stimulated the Rastafarians to posit a number of

⁶ Personal conversation with Ras Boanerges, elder of the Order of the Nyahbinghi, Jamaica, July, 1983.

reasons which account for this non-fulfillment of prophecy. The most significant factor delaying repatriation is the 'trickery' of the white race in attempting to perpetuate the oppression of the black race. The Rastafarians recognize the government's unwillingness to allow total repatriation at its own expense due to the cheap labour pool the blacks form. Another reason adduced, deals with the monetary transaction that occurred between the English government and the plantocracy at the time of Emancipation. Apparently, 20,000,000 pounds were given by the British government to the plantocracy in Jamaica to ease their labour shortage resulting from Emancipation. The Rastafarians believe, that out of this sum, 14.25 million pounds were donated for the cause of repatriation of blacks to Africa (Smith, Augier and Nettleford, 1960).

However, within the Rastafarian community in Jamaica, several different interpretations exist regarding the nature of repatriation. There are several groups that continually lobby the government, seeking repatriation through migration funded by the Jamaican government. There are other groups that espouse a messianic interpretation of repatriation. These groups argue that migration is an individually oriented process and requires the aid of the state. Repatriation, as perceived by these groups, must transfer people en masse, and can only be instituted by divine fiat.

For the Rastafarians, heaven is in this world in the form of Ethiopia which is for them Zion. Repatriation to Ethiopia

then becomes of primary importance to them. Repatriation is an impending reality which will occur in this life. The Rastafarian vision of the millennium as being this worldly and imminent is closely linked with their concept of life and death.

The Rastafarians believe in everlasting life. Death only occurs as a result of transgressing divine laws, and thereby straying from the path of righteousness. Thus, there is no thought given to the concept of heaven or life after death. So, even though they recognize death, they claim that death only touches a Rastafarian if he/she has not led a true life, or if the forces of Babylon have conspired against the individual (Owens, 1976). Most Rastafarians do not attend funerals, since they believe that 'only the dead bury the dead'. In a sense, death represents pollution especially since it results from unclean living or vulnerability to external powers. It can be argued that the Rastafarian attitude to death is a motivating factor in their adherence to a strict vegetarian diet.

Contrary to most other religious groups in Jamaica, such as the Revivalists, Cumina, Obeah, Myal, etc., who believe in 'duppies' or ghosts, the Rastafarians reject any idea of the dead having spirits which could be invoked and used by persons familiar with the occult (Simpson, 1955a, 1955b, White, 1983). Rather, the Rastafarians have a specific interpretation of reincarnation which serves to explain the the fate of the spirit after physical death - which occurs only if the Rastafarian failed to live up to the ideal lifestyle or was deliberately put

to death. The following extract reflects the Rastafarian conception of death.

Death...is above all the wages of sin, the destructive power which will annihilate those who fight against the forces of life. Those who have faithfully served Jah will succeed in finding ever-living life, but those who fail in their services will fade away into the forgetfulness of death. (Owens, 1976:136).

For the Rastafarian, there are only two choices in life: to create and live a righteous life which is eternal, or to sin and suffer death:

It is you must guide yourself to live, to be present, or to be absent. You know God demands two ways: the wages of sin is death - the gift of God is eternal life. (Catman). (Owens, 1976:136).

Death, for the Rastafarian, denotes a state of 'nothingness'. In a sense, there is no concept of death which provides for the type of life after death common in other religious traditions such as Christianity or Islam.

It is interesting to note that the early literature on the movement contains little on this peculiarly Rastafarian attitude to death. Even the concept of reincarnation espoused by the early Rastafarians differs from its contemporary interpretations (Simpson, 1955a, 1955b). It can be argued that these concepts have evolved in terms of their complexity as a function of the development of the belief system over time, and as a result of the input of new converts who come from a higher socio-economic background than did the original adherents.

The concept of reincarnation employed by the Rastafarians differs from its use in Hinduism and other Eastern religions.

Since the Rastafarians are unwilling to accept death as a natural outcome of life, the connection between life and death remains vague. Owens's treatment of the Rastafarians is the only literature on the movement which clarifies, to some degree, this relationship between death and reincarnation. The Rastafarians believe that they are the reincarnated Israelites, and further, that they have been present in the world since the time of creation. Everlasting life is the result of being one of the chosen ones of God. According to Owens's sources, reincarnation in the traditional sense as denoting the transmigration of souls is said to have occurred in the past. At present, reincarnation fails to occur in this sense since the brethren have come to their true consciousness and have realized the divinity of Haile Selassie. A more sophisticated view of reincarnation, also believed by the Rastafarians, is that the personality/spirit of the individual may take on other bodily manifestations but that the period of death in between does not occur. Hence the personality/spirit may leave the one body to occupy another without the interim period of death.

True reincarnation does not follow death but occurs in the midst of life, as the regeneration of the exhausted forces: "Within life there is reincarnation, reconstruction. Life finds itself wearing down, doing wrong, and it regenerates itself, by living, by changing from wrong, complying with the truth." (Catman). (Owens, 1976:142).

The concept of reincarnation, death, and everlasting life is also tied in with the Rastafarian concept of God. The Rastafarians do not view God as an external agent; rather, God

is viewed as residing in man and hence, man is the personification of God. This belief is akin to that of some Hindu and Islamic mystical sects who believe that the individual's goal in life is to attain a state of God consciousness and thereby realize the God within him/herself. In Christianity, this thought finds expression in the mystical stream. Within this concept is a related concept of the Emperor as the perfect man, a man who is the personification of God. The Rastafarians also claim that nature is also a manifestation of God. Thus, man should strive to be natural and God-like.

It is in this vein that the Rastafarians claim that they are in constant communication with Jah (God). In other words, they communicate with their internal God who is, spiritually, a part and parcel of God, the all encompassing, and with God the man, i.e. Haile Selassie. The Rastafarians conceptualize their relationship with Haile Selassie in patriarchal terms, where he is the divine father, and they are his spiritual sons (Barrett, 1977, Owens, 1976). It is this patriarchal and spiritual relationship that adds weight to the Rastafarians desire for repatriation. They claim that since the Emperor is their father, it is only natural that they should desire this geographic proximity (McPherson, 1983, Owens, 1976).

Since the Rastafarians espouse an 'internal' conception of God, they do not believe in communal congregations such as church services (Nicholas, 1979). Rather, the Rastafarians feel that a man's body is his true church because it is the body that

houses the internal God. Thus, any external rituals such as congregational prayers in a church setting are not seen as being necessary. Part of this negative attitude to any form of religious institutionalization can be traced to the Rastafarian position regarding the Vatican and other established church organizations.

The Rastafarians view the Catholic church and its embodiment in the form of the Vatican, as the principal oppressors of the black race. The Pope is seen as the anti-Christ. In fact, the Rastafarians claim that the Pope wears a headdress with the numbers 666 on it, denoting the sign of the beast. In the messianic tradition of the bible, the coming of the messiah is foreshadowed by the appearance of false prophets and the anti-Christ. The Roman Catholic Church is also perceived as representing the evils of Capitalism. It seeks to perpetuate the oppression of the blacks for economic gain and to maintain its power. In addition to this, the Roman Catholic Church is seen as attempting to destroy black culture through its processes of 'whitewashing' the blacks. The process of 'whitewashing' is essentially the socialization of blacks to white cultural ways and thinking. According to the Rastafarians, this process was instituted in the Third World via the introduction of Christianity. It is the consciousness and deliberation by which this method of oppression was put to use that the Rastafarians find so offensive.

The Rastafarians also express extreme distrust and hatred for governmental institutions, both within Jamaica and the world at large. There are several reasons for this negative attitude towards the state. Firstly, the Rastafarian conception of government differs radically from that manifested in the form of the Jamaican government. Secondly, throughout the movement's history, the state has been responsible for the persecution suffered by the Rastafarians. The Rastafarian concept of state is based on the principle of theocracy. A theocratic government is led by a divine king. The closest analogy to this is Plato's concept of a dominion ruled by a philosopher-king. According to one Rastafarian:

Theocratic Government is a divine government that shall rule Creation in Love, Purity, Holiness, and Unity with all the ingredients of Affection, Compassion, and Humility. The Theocratic Government was projected from the foundation of Creation. But because Lucifer polluted it, it broke apart. We come to reunite it into one gigantic force, that it must cover the whole world, like a water cover the sea. That's what the Theocratic Government are: we are no pain, no sickness, no tears, no woe, no man that eat dead cow and woman having birth control and man that put on panther (condom). Because Satan and his host have been trampled under brutal feet of death. When we conquer Babylon, when we conquer the deceiver Pope under brutal feet of death, then it shall be one ruling government - theocracy. Combined with Time, Nature, and Space - those are the three ruling forces of theocracy. The rainbow is the emblem, the dominion, and the power and the glory for all the Theocratic Government, and that's the reason why all those who belongs to this Theocratic Government should project qualities. Not only talk it but utilize it among others. Be a mirror, reflect qualities. (Nicholas, 1979:43)

Thus, Jamaica is seen as participating in the world-wide Babylonian conspiracy geared towards the continued oppression of

the black race, and more specifically, towards barring any real repatriation of blacks to their homeland. The Rastafarians believe that the theocratic form of government will prevail on a world-wide scale when Haile Selassie is officially recognized as the Christ incarnate. In the meantime, the brethren feel that that Ethiopia (their heartland) is the haven for blacks, and under Selassie's rule, experienced a form of theocracy.

With respect to the Emperor's death, the Rastafarians reject any knowledge dealing with this issue. According to many Rastafarians, the Emperor has gone into hiding (a belief similar to that found in some Islamic sects who are awaiting the triumphant return of their Mahdi). They constantly reiterate that as yet none of the remains of Selassie's body have been found, nor is the site of his burial disclosed by the present regime in Ethiopia. The Rastafarians also believe that the Emperor is the personification of God, and hence, is impervious to death. They further argue that the 'death' of Selassie is a concrete example of the Babylonian conspiracy which is aimed at destroying their faith in the Emperor:

That's why they are trying to take away the Black Man from before his own brethren's eyes so that we can be stumbled some more. For we are not belonging to this spot of earth. I-n-I were taken away 20,000 miles away from home to this spot of earth through slavery. And it is prophesied that I-n-I is to return home at this time and they are trying to turn over their captivity upon us who are called by His Imperial Majesty, Emperor Haile-I Selassie-I. That's why they are hiding away Our Great Messiah which come to save the whole world from sin...
(Owens, 1976:261)

Rastafarian 'livity' (lifestyle)

Rastafarian 'livity' refers to a style of living in which the beliefs outlined above are put into everyday practice. Most Rastafarians live in small groups, numbering three or more individuals (Barrett, 1977). Some members occasionally partake in communal living on a temporary basis, returning home to the city where they reside with their families. Rastafarian camps exist, within Jamaica, mostly on fringes of cities and in the rural areas. Some of these communities contain both male and female members. Others, however, are populated only by males. The movement as a whole is male dominated with women occupying a secondary position in group living and participation in rituals. Rastafarians who reside in the urban centres such as Kingston, Montego Bay, Mandoville, or Ocho Rios, often engage in informal gatherings at an individual's member's 'yard' (Yawney, 1979).

The communitarian based camps follow a pattern of living in keeping with the bible and the Rastafarian belief system. The Rastafarians closely follow the Nazarene code which prohibits the cutting hair, the eating of pork, etc. The laws outlined in Leviticus are also followed, disallowing women to participate in daily rituals if they have an issue of blood. In this respect, women undergoing their menstrual period are perceived as being contaminating agents - an assumption also in keeping with the overall negative perception of women (Rowe, 1980). The subservient status of women is also apparent in the

prescriptions regarding their dress and functions. Women, in the Rastafarian tradition, are not allowed to uncover their heads in the presence of men. This practice also stems from injunctions in the bible which stress the wearing of a head covering by all women when in the process of praying or receiving divine instruction. Since women are constantly receiving divine instruction from their kingsmen (husbands), their heads should always be covered (Yawney, 1979).⁷ The men, by contrast, being the bearers of truth, have to remove their tams or head coverings in religious gatherings and rituals.

There are several other restrictions placed on women. In the first instance, women are not allowed to adorn or ornament themselves in any way. Thus, any form of cosmetic application is frowned upon, and even jewellery is largely unacceptable. Women are also not allowed to wear trousers, since the latter are considered to be part of men's clothing. Neither are women permitted to wear clothing which exposes the shape of their bodies or large areas of skin. Thus, while men are able to wear short sleeved shirts or vests, the women have to wear long dresses with long sleeves thereby concealing their bodies. These restrictions on women are very similar to those which prevail amongst women in India, especially in the rural areas. It can be argued that the Rastafarian restrictions on women may have been derived from the Indian tradition particularly since Howell was influenced by an Indian man (Laloo). A second possible reason

⁷ Personal experience also confirms this Rastafarian rule.

may be that the East Indians in Jamaica were a class closest in economic terms to the blacks. The East Indians had first come to Jamaica as indentured labourers. Thus, they formed the buffer group between the blacks and whites. In this sense, the cultural proximity may have served to contribute to the penetration of Indian cultural patterns amongst the black population.

Women, in the Rastafarian tradition, are also not allowed to practice any form of birth control: the latter being considered as one more mechanism by which 'Babylon' attempts to control the black population. Moreover, the Rastafarians feel that it is their duty to propagate the black race and Rastafarianism through an increase in population. In addition, the 'seed' of men is considered to be divine because of its life creating properties, and thus, destruction of this 'seed' is a sin. Contrary to the family patterns of the normative Jamaican family, where the mother is the head of the household, the Rastafarian family unit is completely under the authority of the man. While there is no set rule regarding monogamy, it seems to be a generally accepted rule in the marital type relationships.

Marriage, amongst the Rastafarians, is not sanctified by the church. Most Rastafarians simply refuse to go to church. In most cases, the brethren simply choose their 'queens' and live with them. There is some evidence which indicates that some of these common law relationships are validated by a public ritual of reciting a prayer in the name of Haile Selassie. However, codified rules regarding these aspects of the 'livity' are not

available in the literature (Barrett, 1977).

An important aspect of the Rastafarian livity is the emphasis on dietary laws. These laws are supported by specific biblical references, especially from the old testament. The main prohibition involved is the eating of meat or poultry. The Rastafarians regard any form of meat or poultry as dead flesh. Dead flesh, according to the Rastafarians, should not be consumed by 'living' persons. As one Rastafarian stated, "...consuming meat, fish, eggs or poultry makes your stomach a cemetary as you are taking in dead flesh" (Nicholas, 1979:58).

Aside from this, the Rastafarians are emphatic about their use of natural 'foodstuffs', rather than processed food. They prefer to cook their own food and are extremely wary of food from unknown sources. Rastafarian cooking is known as 'I-tal' meaning natural, and total. I-tal food is total food because it is completely natural, it has no additives, and is not derived from other foods. Women undergoing their menstrual period are forbidden to cook or even enter the cooking area as they are considered to be 'dirty' and could contaminate the food. However, strict adherence to these dietary laws varies with individual Rastafarians. While some Rastafarians totally refrain from eating meat including fish and poultry, others do consume fish. Similarly, while some will go so far as to abstain from eating from a 'blood stained pot' (this refers to pots in which others have cooked meat), others, will if invited by visitors and friends, eat from these pots. One can find a resemblance

here with the strict dietary laws of some Hindu groups which also forbid the consumption of any type of meat. A more sophisticated reason advanced for this prohibition against eating meat, and which is also found amongst the Hindus, is that the consumption of meat enhances the baser instincts of human beings. Thus, the result is an accentuation of sexual desires and a heightening of negative emotions such as anger, greed, jealousy, etc. (McPherson, personal communication, Jamaica, July, 1983).

Rastafarian argot is an interesting product of the movement. Described as 'I-lect' (Pochard, 1983), the argot centers on an extensive use of the word 'I'. This 'I' is prefixed before other words. Thus, 'children' becomes 'I-dren', 'unity' becomes 'I-nity', 'forever' translates into 'I-ver', 'continually' changes to 'I-tinually', 'meditation' becomes 'I-ditation', and 'protection' becomes 'I-detection'. Aside from this extensive use of the word 'I', the Rastafarians also attribute meaning and distinction to the word 'man' as opposed to 'men'. In this context, the word 'movement' becomes 'movemant', 'government' becomes 'governmant' when used to denote theocracy. These variations in speech connote a specific meaning which is not found in everyday usage of Jamaican creole or standard Jamaican English. The evolution of this argot is relatively recent and is not mentioned in the early studies of the movement (e.g. Simpson, 1955a, 1955b, Smith et al., 1960).

In addition to the above, the most commonly used terms in the argot are 'I and I', 'I-n-I', 'I man', 'I dem', and 'di I' (Pochard, 1983). The use of 'I' in 'I-n-I' is a conscious switch from the word 'me' prevalent in Jamaican creole. The Rastafarians claim, that the use of 'me' was initiated with the socialization or 'whitewashing' of the slave's mind. The use of 'me' was deliberately ingrained in the slave's speech in order to negate his/her subjective identity. The 'me' then objectified the slave, thus degrading the slave's position and subjective self perception. In this regard, the use of 'I' is a calculated act by the Rastafarians to replace the secondary nature and objectivity of 'me' in Jamaican creole (Barrett, 1977). The use of the two 'I's in the phrase 'I and I' which the Rastafarians use in a singular as well as a plural sense, is used to denote the harmony between them and others, and between the spiritual and material dimensions of their lives. Hence, the first 'I' refers to their spirit which resides in the second 'I' - their body. Forsythe (1983) advances an alternate interpretation of the use of 'I and I' in Rastafarian argot. He states,

...Rastafarians always talk of 'I and I'. This refers to the unity of the speaker with the most High (Jah) and with his fellowmen. I and I simply refers to 'me' and 'my God' - the one 'I' is the little I and the other the Big I. (Pochard, 1983:13).

With respect to the difference between 'man' and 'men' cited earlier, the Rastafarians attribute a positive connotation to one and a negative connotation to the other. A 'man' is one who is conscious and who has realized the divinity of Haile

Selassie. 'Men', by contrast, are people who have no consciousness and are usually hostile to the Rastafarians. 'Men' is also used in a singular sense denoting a person who is evil, or in the employment of the forces of 'Babylon'. Similarly the Jamaican government differs from the theocratic government, and the Rastafarian movement is spoken of as the Rastafarian movement, accentuating the pronunciation of the last syllable (McPherson, 1983, personal communication, Pochard, 1983).

Another term commonly used in the argot is 'dread'. This is derived from the term 'dreadful'. When people first perceived the locks of the Rastafarians, they called them dreadful because of the fear and awe they inspired. Until a few years ago, a Rastafarian would call a fellow member a 'dread' indicating the common ties they shared (Barrett, 1977, Owens, 1976). Now, however, the term 'dread' connotes a person who is masquerading as a Rastafarian rather than one who shares a common belief.⁸ This reflects the continual change in the use of the argot. Yet, 'dread' also represents a collective sense of identity and experience to the Rastafarians. Joseph Owens (1976) describes this experience of dread as,

The well-spring in Rastafarian theology, the centre around which everything revolves and from which all moves outward, is the experience of dread. Dread is an experience of a people with a primordial but historically denied racial selfhood. (1976:3).

Thus, 'dread', indicates a collective experience of slavery and subordination which because of its traumatic nature has left its

⁸ From observations of the brethren in Jamaica, July, 1983).

mark on the minds of the people. Above all, it seems that the notion of 'dread' separates the Rastafarians from other groups that are located on the fringes of Jamaican society. This separation and group isolation is in some senses, perpetuated by the Rastafarians themselves through their distinct lifestyle and use of argot. Barrett describes this argot as,

...a religious language of a strange type. Few outsiders can make sense of what the average cultist says. In the first place, it is ungrammatical when spoken by the uneducated; secondly, it is Jamaican dialect used on a philosophical level, a burden which it was not created to bear; and finally, the Rastafarian speech is almost devoid of subject-object opposition as well as without verbs. (Barrett, 1977:143)

Rastafarians believe in 'wordsound power' (Nicholas, 1979). This indicates a belief in the power of words which stems from Rastafarian theology. According to the Rastafarians, God created the world through an act of speech. Thus, words have the power to create an atmosphere and bring to materialization their semantic content. It seems that the concept of wordsound power also serves as alternate but implicit function for the Rastafarians. It has been noted in the literature that the Rastafarians comprise one of the most articulate groups in Jamaica, and also to some degree in other parts of the world. It can be argued that when a group lacks access to political power and representation, it may utilize other means of exerting power, even though these may be through face-to-face interactions rather than on an institutional plane. Changing words into the argot enables the Rastafarians to create a subjective world of meaning, a reality unto themselves

(Cashmore, 1979).

Certain common words form the base of the argot and serve to communicate one member's identity to another. Thus, words such as Irie, seen, dread, overstand, one love, Babylon etc. would all be incomprehensible to the outsider but have a very real message to the Rastafarians. It is worth elaborating on some of these words as an example of this subjective world created by the Rastafarians. Rastafarians will never use the word 'understand' since 'under' connotes a downward movement whereas the real meaning of the word is to transcend or comprehend. So, the Rastafarians use 'overstanding' instead. Similarly, Rastafarians never use words such as 'to return' or 'to come back'. Rather, the customary phrases used are 'I and I will soon come forward'. When the Rastafarians wish to acknowledge the truth of a statement, or convey an understanding they usually replace such words as 'yes' with the word 'seen'. This implies that the statement is both visually seen, and verbally understood. Cognitively, this indicates that the concepts take on a pictorial image in the person's mind. 'Seen' also reflects an underlying assumption that the Rastafarian, through his capacity of intuition, is able to 'see' the essence of what has been said. This is similar to the Indian belief that a spiritually advanced person is able to see the external world through his/her 'third eye'. In this sense, the use of 'I' could represent this third 'eye'.

A favorite Rastafarian ritual is to sit in small groups from between two to ten persons and engage in conversation. This process is referred to as 'reasoning'. Reasoning can involve a range of topics such as politics, world events, or religious issues. It is this collective process of reasoning that perpetuates the existing argot, and allows for the innovation of other elements which are constantly added to the argot. In part, it is also this process of reasoning which makes the Rastafarians such a highly articulate group of people. The reasoning process embodies a didactic form of teaching, whereby one Rastafarian teaches another (Owens, 1976). No matter what the actual content of the discussion may be, the reasoning process is always punctuated by biblical passages which are recited loudly, and is accompanied by a ritualized intake of marijuana (ganja).

The consumption of ganja, in any form, is a vital element of the Rastafarian livity. The Indian usage of this drug is rooted in the traditional religious ritual of pilgrimage and immersion in the waters of the River Ganges. As with the Indians, the Rastafarians consider ganja as possessing powers of purification. One can assume that the Rastafarian usage of the label 'ganja' is derived from its early association with the Indian community in Jamaica (Barrett, 1977).

Ganja is considered to be sacred by the Rastafarians. For them, it symbolizes peace and meditation. Because of its soothing properties, the drug plays a primary role in religious

ritual. Further, ganja is also considered to be the 'weed of Solomon' - a name derived from the tale that the herb grew on Solomon's grave, and thus represents one way of acquiring Solomon's wisdom (Barrett, 1977). Ganja is also used as a medicinal herb and is utilized in the preparation of food and tea. However, the Rastafarians claim that not everybody can smoke the drug and derive the qualities of peace and wisdom. The drug will only bring out these qualities in a true Rastafarian, and in an individual who already possesses some religious insight. For those who are steeped in Babylonian ways, the drug will only serve to confuse them or create madness in their minds. In this sense, the Rastafarians claim that Babylon is trying to control and above all destroy the cultivation of ganja for the very reason that it brings out negative and destructive behaviours in them. Moreover, continuous use of the drug by non-Rastafarians, who already possess some measure of consciousness, would culminate in their realization of the divinity of Haile Selassie, and the evilness of the Babylonian system. Most Rastafarians are emphatic about the mystical powers of the drug, and some even claim that without habitual consumption of marijuana, they would never have realized the truth of Rastafarianism (Owens, 1976).

In the history of the movement, the practice of smoking ganja seemed to have originated as a form of 'mute' protest against society, and as a mechanism differentiating the Rastafarians from their other Jamaican counterparts. While ganja

is viewed as a natural herb, alcohol is seen as a brewed mixture made from rotten fruit. Rastafarians will often quote passages from the bible in defence of their use of the drug. They claim that ganja is a gift from God (Jah), and that man is encouraged to use it to derive peace and wisdom. The most oft cited passages supporting the Rastafarian use of ganja are Genesis 1:12, 1:18, and Psalm 104:14 (Barrett, 1977, Smith et.al, 1960).

Out of all these aspects of livity, one in particular has caused some controversy and dissension in the early history of the Rastafarian movement - a dissension which, in most cases, resulted in the formation of different subgroups within the movement. This controversial issue stemmed from the edict of growing locks. At the time of the movement's inception, the Rastafarians did not wear locks. Rather, most members of the faith identified themselves by wearing beards, and through the use of accessories and clothing which bore the colours of the Ethiopian flag (red, gold an green). However, with the evolution of the belief system, the wearing of dreadlocks gradually came into being. The Rastafarians support this tenet with the Levitical order, 21:5.

The practice of wearing dreadlocks originated in the ghettos, prior to the formation of the Pinnacle commune (McPherson, 1983). However, the first mention of locksmen appeared in the Daily Gleaner in the forties in a description of the Pinnacle guardsmen as wearing locks. The practice became an integral part of the belief system as interpreted by the House

of the Youth Black Faith. Some members of this core organization (e.g. Sam Brown) disagreed with this precept and seceded from this organization to create one of their own. Yet the practice of wearing locks served several functions. In the first instance it functioned as a mechanism of differentiation, separating the Rastafarians from other groups in society. Secondly, it embodied a form of protest against the English oriented norms of Jamaican society.

The above mentioned aspects of the Rastafarian livity have gained wide currency both amongst the Rastafarian groups outside Jamaica and amongst the youth in Jamaica. The Rastafarian culture has come to permeate every aspect of Jamaican lifestyle, whether it be food, music, argot, or dress. The colours red, gold and green seem to be more prevalent than the national colours of Jamaica. Even with respect to the arts, Rastafarian themes of 'sufferation' and redemption through repatriation, are constantly portrayed in theatrical productions and films (Nettleford, 1972).

However, the most common denominator pervading the numerous groups within the movement (both in its indigenous context and elsewhere) is Reggae music. Reggae music is equated to the music of the 'sufferers' from the ghettos. The development of this highly specific type of musical beat is well documented in other studies (e.g. Clarke, 1980, Davis and Simon, 1977, Shibata, 1981). The music is essentially guided by a monotonous beat with lyrics sung in harmony or in some cases over the melody. With

the Rastafarians, it is the lyrics that are the source of attraction. The music, in the Rastafarian context, is a powerful medium for the message of redemption. The lyrics contain codified and dramatic expositions of the belief system, rituals, world-view and of the trials and tribulations of individual Rastafarians. Aside from this, the music also serves as a powerful mechanism for social commentary. Politicians in Jamaica at election times have used Reggae music to broadcast their political ideologies (Tafari, 1980, White, 1983). In addition, the commercialization of the music has also contributed to the rapid growth and spread of the movement.

The aspirations of young Jamaican musicians also serve to perpetuate the Reggae music explosion. The appeal of the music lies in the special Rastafarian rhetoric it transmits. Thus, aspiring musicians often emulate Rastafarian styles to improve record sales. The Rastafarian elders recognize this commercial use of the belief system and are therefore critical of Reggae music and musicians. Yet, it is difficult to differentiate between sincere and true Rastafarians and those that merely manipulate the belief system for particular ends. This problem of differentiation is rooted in the particular process of conversion extant in the movement.

The Rastafarian process of conversion is a highly individualistic one. Conversion occurs through an internal realization of the truth of Rastafarianism. Kitzinger (1969) has termed this a type of 'inborn conversion'. However, later

admittance to a more formal religious group within the Rastafarian movement such as the Order of the Nyahbinghi, requires some display of commitment, but even this is not overt. Thus, the older Rastafarians, who have seen the birth of the movement and have suffered persecution as a result of their faith, distrust the musicians whom they regard as 'wolves in sheep's clothing' based on the fact that the latter have 'sold' out the secrets of the movement through commercialization of the music, and have failed to channel the profits into the Rastafarian community (McPherson, 1983). Shibata (1981) also points out that the majority of songs produced by Reggae musicians lack the specific drum beat found in the Nyahbinghi ritual music. This is the music played at Rastafarian gatherings called 'Nyahbinghis' or 'binghis'. Nevertheless, Reggae music still plays an important role in contributing to the growth of the movement.

In conclusion, it can be seen that the Rastafarian movement, since its inception in the 1930's, has developed a comprehensive belief system which provides explanations regarding the initial cause of oppression, the process whereby one can retain the original ideal state, and the nature of the final redemption through repatriation.

The following chapter provides a critical overview of the existing literature on the Rastafarian movement emphasizing the various conceptualizations of the movement. In addition, a critical survey of the literature in the sociology of religion

dealing with the various typologies of religious organization is also undertaken with the view of delineating those types that pertain to an analysis of the Rastafarian movement.

III. The Rastafarian Movement and the Typologies of Religious Organization

The rapid growth and expansion of the Rastafarian movement in the last five decades has given rise to a number of studies dealing with the Rastafarians. While the majority of these studies have focused on the movement within its indigenous context, i.e. Jamaica, there have been attempts made to understand the manifestation of Rastafarianism in a variety of other geographic areas (e.g. Campbell, 1980b, Cashmore, 1979, and Wilson, 1978). A significant factor contributing to the presence of Rastafarianism in areas other than Jamaica has been that of West Indian migration to these areas. This factor of migration has also led to an increased interest, on the part of the immigrants in host countries, in maintaining some measure of their cultural identity, e.g. music, food, lifestyle, etc. To an extent, it is this interest that has fuelled the commercialization of Reggae music and its infiltration into the world-wide music industry.

Although some of these factors have been dealt with in the literature (e.g. Clarke, 1980), very little attention has been paid to the role of the movement's structure in contributing to its survival and success in other parts of the world. Moreover, it would seem apparent that the movement's organization would differ in different environments as a function of the range of

diverse elements operating within these social contexts. However, the nature of this difference has not been fully examined in the literature. The following review of the literature on the Rastafarians brings to light some of these short-comings insofar as they pertain to the goals of this thesis.

Existing literature on the markedly millenarian but theologically loosely articulated Rastafarian movement is informed by a number of different theoretical perspectives. The most comprehensive work so far has been that of Leonard Barrett (1968, 1977). Barrett employs a primarily socio-historical perspective in tracing the genesis and evolution of the movement in its Jamaican context. The major strength of his contribution lies in his analysis of the origins of Rastafarianism in Jamaica. Barrett conceptualizes the movement as a millenarian messianic 'cult' based on the key role attached to the former Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia as the returned messiah. The major criticism levelled at Barrett's treatment is his reliance on one particular informant, Sam Brown.¹ Thus, his portrait of the movement appears to be somewhat slanted since the informant in question belongs to a particular group within the movement

¹Sam Brown belongs to one of the politically inclined groups in the Rastafarian movement in Jamaica. Ras Sam Brown also ran for elections in 1962 for a governmental position representing one section of Kingston (personal communication, McPherson, 1983). In the recent International Theocratic Assembly Congress of Rastafarians in Jamaica, (July, 1983), I observed many negative reactions and comments directed towards Sam Brown. In fact, some Rastafarians accused Sam Brown of coopting the movement by accepting government funding for the congress.

which has a decidedly 'political' interpretation of the Rastafarian faith. Nonetheless, aside from this drawback, Barrett's analysis delineates in great detail the belief system of the movement, and the factors that contributed to its genesis. Although Barrett uses the term 'cultists' when referring to the Rastafarians, he fails to concretely define his usage of this term.

Orlando Patterson (1964), a Jamaican sociologist, has described the Rastafarian movement as a 'cult of outcasts'. His analysis is based on the theory of relative deprivation which he utilizes to substantiate his argument that the Rastafarians are drawn exclusively from the lower echelons of the social order and hence the membership of the movement is comprised of 'poor blacks' who are attracted to the vision of redemption and repatriation offered by Rastafarianism. While this is true to some degree, such a generalization fails to capture the character of the movement in its contemporary manifestations. Further, such a description of the movement is misleading given its cooptation in the sixties, and its expansion, in terms of membership, to other levels of the social stratification system. Patterson also treats the movement as a monolithic entity, an assumption which is questionable given the range of interpretations of the belief system, and the variety of groups which exist within the Rastafarian movement.

However, Patterson's novel, 'The Children of Sisyphus' (1965), remains an invaluable descriptive source of information

on the early Rastafarians and their perception of the reality of repatriation. In this fictional account, it is clear that Patterson views the Rastafarians as being drawn to the 'fantastic' dreams and aspirations of the belief system which allows them an escape from the reality and plight of their condition. In contrast to the revolutionary nature of most millenarian movements, Patterson views the Rastafarian movement as articulating a posture of rebellion against established society. Thus, rather than radically transforming the social order, he maintains that the Rastafarians merely want to change their degree of powerlessness. This view supports the attitudinal change noted by Barrett (1977) amongst the Rastafarians from that of total and imminent repatriation to 'liberation before repatriation'. However, the concrete manifestation of this change in attitude is not widespread amongst the Rastafarians in Jamaica (McPherson, 1983). Although this treatment of the Rastafarians is a fictional account, it nevertheless provides some indication of the prevailing perception of the Rastafarian movement and the nature of its belief system at this time.

Another fictional account of the Rastafarians has been presented by the late Roger Mais, a Jamaican writer, in his work entitled 'Brother Man' (1954). While this remains a work of fiction, it nevertheless serves to accentuate the social fabric of the Rastafarians and thus taps into an area of research which has remained largely unexplored. 'Brother Man' focuses on the

persecution suffered by the early adherents of Rastafarianism. This treatment also offers a descriptive account of the perceptions of Jamaican society regarding the Rastafarians, and puts into perspective the labelling of the Rastafarians as 'dreads'. It is interesting to note that both Mais and Patterson define the Rastafarians as 'cultists', using the term in a pejorative and popular sense.

Simpson's early studies of the Rastafarians (1955a, 1955b, 1962), describe the movement as a 'politico-religious cult' based on the violent and anti-establishment rhetoric expounded by the early Rastafarians. Simpson's line of inquiry stems from the theoretical framework within the sociology of religion dealing with millennial movements. Simpson's work has paved the way for future research on aspects of Rastafarianism. His analysis of the movement as a millennial messianic movement forms the corner stone of later academic attempts to understand the social reality of the Rastafarians. Simpson's account also remains unique insofar as a description of the early street meetings and organization of the movement is concerned. His treatment of the Rastafarians also serves to clarify the differences between them and other religious groups present in Jamaica. However, considering the international character of the movement today, Simpson's analysis is not wholly applicable and is somewhat outdated.

Smith, Augier and Nettleford's (1960) report on the Rastafarians in Kingston, Jamaica, offers an interesting account

of the movement in the early sixties. As such, the report is a significant contribution to the literature based on the fact that it was initiated by the Rastafarians themselves, and moreover, was undertaken by three sociologists familiar with the socio-political development of Jamaica. The report was also crucial in generating further research on the Rastafarian movement, and has in this respect, formed the basis of later studies on the movement. The major criticism which can be levelled at the report stems from the empirical investigation undertaken by the team of sociologists. The study was conducted in a period of two weeks, and the Rastafarian sample interviewed was located in Kingston. Hence the findings, it can be argued, are not representative of the movement as a whole. Furthermore, the positive bias of the report, and its obvious tailoring to suit the interests of the establishment, and for public consumption, lead one to question its integrity. Since the study was conducted in 1960, many events have occurred which have affected the Rastafarian community in Jamaica. The impact of these events, such as Haile Selassie's visit, have influenced the direction of the movement's evolution. In this light, the report, though containing valuable information, does not capture the nature of the Rastafarian movement in its contemporary manifestation. However, the report is significant in its recognition of the heterogenous character of the movement, and its discussion of the various groups that existed in the late fifties.

Kitzinger's (1966, 1969) studies of the Rastafarian movement employ a theoretical framework derived from anthropology and psychoanalysis. Kitzinger offers a more thorough account of the Rastafarians when compared to other studies of the movement. She explores the role of women in the movement, and also examines some of the different Rastafarian groups. However, in her description of the movement, she follows Simpson, and identifies the Rastafarian movement as a 'politico-religious protest cult'. While Kitzinger describes the movement as a whole in terms of a 'cult', she does make reference to one Rastafarian group as a 'sect'. Yet, her usage of these terms remains undefined.

The advent of the seventies was marked by a burgeoning of research on the Rastafarians. The majority of the studies in this period, were in the form of theses and dissertations by students at the University of West Indies, and later on from other parts of the world. While a lot of this research provided further insights into the Rastafarian movement with regard to its precipitating causes (e.g. Chevannes, 1971), its political potential (e.g. Albuquerque, 1977), and its music (e.g. Clarke, 1980, Shibata, 1981), most of these studies did not address the question of the type of religious organization that the Rastafarian movement embodies. In this respect, only one dissertation addresses this issue (Yawney, 1979).

Yawney's treatment of the Rastafarians is the most thorough and contemporary account of the movement. She describes the

Rastafarian movement as being a 'visionary' movement based on the secular and religious orientations expressed by the membership. Yawney's analysis of the Rastafarians also includes discussions of the conversion process, the recruitment of members, and the heterogeneity of the movement. She describes the Rastafarian movement as exhibiting both sectarian and cultic features. Yawney also emphasizes the role of prophecy within the movement (i.e. the Rastafarians claim that they are the prophets of this age, hence they are visionary - having the ability to perceive the future). The major drawback of Yawney's treatment of the Rastafarians is her lack of analysis regarding these cultic and sectarian features, especially with respect to the various organizations existing in the movement. Her introduction of yet another label (visionary) to describe the Rastafarian movement, reveals to a degree, a reluctance towards using existing concepts in the sociology of religion which may adequately apprehend the social reality of the Rastafarians.

The increasing number of Rastafarians in England has also given rise to several studies dealing with the movement in this context (e.g. Cashmore, 1979, Hebdige, 1976). Cashmore's analysis of the Rastafarians is rooted in the sociological tradition. He utilizes in particular, the works of Michael Barkun (1974) and the anthropologist Ian Jarvie (1972). Cashmore's coinage of the term 'Babylonian conspiracy' serves as a valuable tool in describing and understanding the Rastafarian attitude towards the state and the wider society. Cashmore also

explores the role of music in spreading the Rastafarian message to West Indian blacks in England. Further, he examines the relationships of the movement with other groups in society such as the Asian minority, the police, and with such 'marginal' English groups as the Skinheads, the Mods, and the Punk Rockers. Cashmore's analysis of the Rastafarian movement in England stands as a significant account of the movement outside its indigenous setting.

There are several studies of the movement which lack any theoretical grounding but which provide detailed descriptions of the Rastafarian lifestyle and belief system. Nicholas and Sparrow's popularly oriented work falls in this category (1979). Nicholas's account of the Rastafarians is biased towards the positive aspects of Rastafarianism. However, her contribution is a valuable one in that it offers a concise and thorough account of the Rastafarian world-view and lifestyle. Unfortunately, her sample is drawn from one area, and this is most apparent in her account of the Rastafarian myth of creation which is based on one group's interpretation, and is therefore not representative of other groups within the movement. Yet her treatment of the Rastafarians is a significant contribution to this body of literature based on the detailed discussions of key Rastafarian concepts such as theocracy, the prohibitions regarding the consumption of meat, and the Rastafarian use of marijuana.

Joseph Owens's (1976) appropriately titled work 'Dread' also falls in this category of descriptive studies on the

Rastafarian movement. Essentially, this study is a compilation of ethnographic data based on interviews with approximately sixty Rastafarian groups located in various parts of Kingston, Jamaica. As such the work offers a wealth of information in the form of 'raw data' which can be utilized for the construction of viable theoretical frameworks through which the phenomenon of Rastafarianism can be better understood. Nettleford's introduction to Owens's book presents a concise account of the evolution of the movement from a historical and analytical perspective. Nettleford stresses the role of the movement in providing the oppressed blacks with a sense of identity and racial pride. In this respect, Nettleford's earlier treatment of the movement (1972) also emphasizes this importance of Rastafarianism as a source of identity and racial pride.

There have been several attempts made in the literature to compare the Rastafarians of Jamaica with the Black Muslims of the United States (e.g. Barrett, 1968, Watson, 1973). Above all, these studies indicate that both movements have arisen as a function of the oppressive conditions prevalent in the particular social contexts. Thus, both movements express protest and rebellion against their respective societies.

In addition, the literature also contains a number of studies of the movement undertaken by the Rastafarians themselves (e.g. Clarke, 1980, McPherson, 1980, Rowe, 1980, Tafari, 1980). These studies are invaluable in providing the Rastafarian perspective on different issues related to the

movement. In some cases, these studies also attempt to correct misconceptions in the existing literature (e.g. McPherson, 1980, Rowe, 1980).

Other studies examine with widely varying degrees of sociological emphasis and sophistication the 'forms of Jah' (the various organizations and loosely structured groups established for the worship of the Rastafarian deity) in other areas of the Caribbean (e.g. Ansley, 1981, Cambell, 1980b), the United States (e.g. Case, 1981), and amongst West Indian groups in Canada (e.g. Wilson, 1978). What should be emphasized is that a great majority of these works are discrete studies of one aspect of the Rastafarian lifestyle e.g. the use of ganja (Ansley, 1981), the role of music (Clarke, 1980, Shibata, 1981), or of the movement in one geographical context considered in virtual isolation from the rest (e.g. Barrett, 1977, Cashmore, 1979, and Yawney, 1979).

Studies of the movement undertaken from an anthropological or sociological perspectives have loosely defined the movement as a 'religio-protest cult' (Kitzinger, 1966, 1969, Simpson, 1955a, 1955b, 1962), as a 'cult of outcasts' (Patterson, 1964), a 'messianic cult' (Barrett, 1968, 1977), a 'visionary movement' (Yawney, 1979), and more generally as a 'cult'. Thus far, no serious effort has been made to analyze the structure of the movement as it pertains to such types of religious organizations as 'cults' or 'sects'. Furthermore, while most researchers have noted the diversity that exists within the movement - both in

terms of the differentiation in interpretations and personal commitment, they have in the final analysis, treated the movement as a monolithic entity - albeit a loosely organized one. In fact, some researchers have gone as far as to say that the movement has no structure binding it, while others have referred to it as a 'polycephalous' structure (Yawney, 1979), and as having a 'cellular' organization (McPherson, 1983).

It is apparent, from an examination of this literature, that certain features of the Rastafarian movement belie its classification as simply a 'sect' or 'cult'. Moreover, it is also apparent from the recent literature in this area that, in contrast to most millennial movements which are short-lived or which survive as a function of institutionalization (Zygmunt, 1975), the Rastafarian movement displays a complex type of religious organization which has allowed it to survive and expand dramatically in the last five decades, and which at the same time has not resulted in the total institutionalization of the movement.

Since the Rastafarian movement has (wittingly or unwittingly) been conceptualized as a 'cult' in the literature, an examination of the literature dealing with this concept is potentially pertinent to an analysis of the movement. Moreover, it is clear that the religious nature of the belief system places such an analysis within the framework of the sociology of religion. The following account presents a critical review of the literature dealing with the typologies of religious

organizations. The purpose of this exercise is to bring to light some of the inadequacies of current conceptualizations of the movement as a 'cult', and to offer one potentially viable tool through which to accurately apprehend the Rastafarian movement in its totality.

It must be emphasized that a conceptual clarification of the label of 'cult' has so far been lacking in the literature on the Rastafarians. It would seem that these researchers have employed the term 'cult' in a popular sense connoting a loosely organized deviant movement. Furthermore, they fail to discuss the specific features of the movement which leads to its classification as a 'cult' rather than a 'sect'. That such a definition falls short of apprehending, in an accurate manner, the reality of the varying organizational forms of the Rastafarian movement can be seen from the review of the literature which follows.

Typologies of Religious Organizations

According to Max Weber,

However incisive the social influences, economically and politically determined, may have been upon a religious ethic in a particular case, it receives its stamp primarily from religious sources, and, first of all, from the content of its annunciation and its promise. Frequently the very next generation reinterprets these annunciations and promises in a fundamental fashion. Such reinterpretations adjust the revelations to the needs of the religious community. If this occurs, then it is at least usual that religious doctrines are adjusted to religious needs. (Gerth and Mills, 1946:270).

While religious movements may arise as a function of the interaction between social, economic and religious variables, their later development into systematic and somewhat closed belief systems is accompanied by the evolution of a different type of religious organization. Thus, the evolution of Christianity from a religious system catering to the fringe and deprived groups of society, to a major institutionalized and state religion, reflects on this transition in organizational forms. It is this change in the types of religious organization that has generated studies within the sociology of religion dealing with this issue (Hill, 1973).

The literature dealing with ideal typical constructs of religious organizations stems from the early studies of Weber and Troeltsch in this area. Both Weber and Troeltsch maintained that the source of religious movements was an 'authentic one' i.e. it was a religious one, but that later disparities and distinctions arose as a result of man's tendency to distort and shape doctrine according to his own needs and beliefs - a process Weber identified as 'elective affinities' (Weber, 1930). Weber conceptualized the church and sect as being located at extreme ends of a continuum. The latter being based on the degree and type of social organization, such that the sect would gradually acquire the features of a church through the process of the routinization of charisma. This entailed a loss of personal charismatic authority within the sect which was then replaced by charisma attached to office. Troeltsch, in contrast,

envisioned the church and sect as distinct polar types having a dialectical relationship, the conflict of which culminated in the formation of mysticism as a distinct type of religion (Hill, 1973). It is this concept of mysticism which serves as a departure point for later formulations of the concept of cult (e.g. Campbell, 1972, 1977, Nelson, 1969, and Wallis, 1975).

Subsequent writers have advanced a multitude of variations on these original Weberian concepts of sect and church, and on Troeltsch's related conceptualizations of sect, church and mysticism. However, while these later conceptualizations vary with respect to their emphasis on different facets of religious organizations, a consensus does appear to exist in the literature regarding the ideal typical features of the cult, and sect.

The consensus on the criteria that define a sect is based on such ideal typical sectarian features as an aggressive response to the world; a self concept of the collective membership as the 'gathered remnant or the elect of God'; a locus of authority which is centred within the sect, usually in the form of personal charismatic authority; its totalitarian hold over the membership; its requirement of some external form of commitment on the part of the membership; and finally, its attitude and response to the question of salvation (Berger, 1954, Wallis, 1975, Yinger, 1970). In conjunction with the above features, Wilson (1969, 1970, 1973), has formulated a seven fold typology of different types of sects based on the difference in

attitude to the world as manifested by the sect. Aside from the high degree of organization of sectarian groups, another key differentiating feature of most sects, as outlined by Wilson, is that they have emerged from a 'split' with the traditional mainstream religious organizations. While the Rastafarian movement approximates to the Wilson's ideal typical Revolutionist sect, there are other groups extant in the movement which approach Wilson's description of an Introversionist sect. In addition, the range of groups present in the Rastafarian movement display markedly varying attitudes to the world and interpret the goal of 'salvation' in different ways. Thus, it can be argued that while Wilson's typology does have some bearing on the Rastafarian movement, the latter also exhibits other features which approximate more closely to other types of religious organizations.

On the a general level, the Rastafarian movement does not approach the religious organization of the ideal type of sect. While the Rastafarians consider themselves to be the 'chosen' of God or the 'true Israelite', and display an attitude of avoidance and active aggression towards the wider society, (which is viewed as Babylon), the movement as a whole does not possess a high level of internal organization, or exhibit the characteristics of exclusivity, totalitarianism, and a central charismatic locus of authority which is located within the movement, and which exercises power over the membership. Further, the level of commitment expressed by Rastafarians is

not overt or based on any external ritual. Consequently, individual Rastafarians display varying degrees of commitment which are based entirely on their own volition and interpretation of the belief system. Insofar as a 'split' from the traditional religious organization is concerned, the emergence of Rastafarianism in Jamaica coincided with the appearance of a wide variety of other religious groups which also differed drastically from the 'mainstream religious tradition', insofar as one can be defined.

A blanket conceptualization of the Rastafarian movement as a 'sect' does not take into consideration certain integral features of the movement which militate against this type of classification. Above all, the overall loosely articulated theology of the Rastafarians does not approach that of the ideal typical sect. Although it must be noted that certain groups within the movement do approximate the sectarian type of religious organization, the movement as a whole cannot be described as a 'sect' especially in light of the conversion process it espouses, and the individualistic orientation of the membership with regard to their interpretation and practice of the Rastafarian faith.

Since most of the studies on the Rastafarian movement have typified the latter as a 'cult', an examination of the various formulations of the concept of 'cult' is particularly cogent in an analysis which seeks to better understand the social reality of the Rastafarian movement. The prevailing conceptualization of

the term 'cult' in the existing literature stresses its highly fluid, ephemeral, and deviant nature (e.g. Campbell, 1972, 1977, Nelson, 1969, Wallis, 1975, and Yinger, 1969). Other researchers have incorporated the elements of individuality, mysticism, and the requirement of an ecstatic experience as part of the ideal typical features of a cult. These ideal typical features are clearly derived from Troeltsch's original conception of mysticism. Mysticism, within Troeltsch's framework (which it must be noted was restricted to Christendom, and which was largely extrapolated from the position of Christianity in medieval Europe), reflects a highly individualistic orientation towards the search for salvation. The mystic is himself the locus of authority. The mystic seeks unity in diversity, with the paramount aim of achieving union with the Godhead. The path of the mystic is therefore a syncretistic one since all paths are considered to lead to the same source. The mystic attempts to carve out a path for himself, drawing from the religious traditions available to him. Troeltsch indicated that mysticism as a religion was only suitable to the tastes of the upper classes since they alone could afford to indulge in the time consuming contemplative activities inherent in mysticism; furthermore, it is only members of the upper classes who are literate enough to enjoy the consciousness of the esoteric dimensions of the prevailing religious traditions.

While later researchers have drawn from Troeltsch's conception of mysticism, and have defined its corresponding type

of religious organization as that of cult, they have in the process accentuated some features at the expense of others. Troeltsch's emphasis on individuality, to the extent that he denied the mystic's need for collective congregation, has been accentuated by others in their conceptualization of cult (e.g. Martin, 1965, Yinger, 1970). These authors have extended the principle of individuality to the degree that cults, within their frameworks, are mobilized on the basis of an individualistic conception of salvation. Secondly, other writers, (e.g. Nelson, 1969, Wallis, 1975), have emphasized the short lifespan of cults.

Within the Rastafarian movement, the conception of salvation is clearly a collective one, and not individualistic in the sense denoted by Martin and Yinger. Collective salvation for the Rastafarians takes the form of repatriation en masse an event which will be instigated by the messiah - Haile Selassie, and which will be preceded by the cataclysmic overthrow of the existing world order. However, there are some individual Rastafarians who espouse an individualistic conception of salvation, but this conception is not representative of the movement as a whole. In addition, the Rastafarian movement has not only survived its initial period of incubation in Jamaica, but has grown and expanded to an international scale over the last fifty years.

Martin (1965), also argues that cults emerge when individuals with common beliefs come together. This indicates

that these common beliefs form only a part of the individual's total lifestyle. Hence, the individual's life is not guided by his 'cultic beliefs'. The cult, then, only influences one segment of the individual's life. This line of argument, though not explicitly stated, implies that 'flying saucer cults' are similar to other religious cults such as the Spritualists. Also implicit in Martin's argument is the contention that the historical origins of the cult's belief system are of no consequence to cult members. The Rastafarians as a whole, consider their religious belief system as being totally encapsulating such that Rastafarianism becomes a way of life. The Rastafarian 'reasoning' sessions draw members together to discuss and debate biblical prophecies as well as present day events. These informal gatherings are also geared towards discussing problematic aspects of the belief system and the individual member's experiences as a Rastafarian. The Rastafarians thus share a common world-view and not merely a belief system which influences or pertains to only one aspect of thier lives. Moreover, their history of oppression and persecution serves to create a sense of collective identity which surpasses that which may be found in Martin's ideal type of cult.

Some contemporary writers (e.g. Campbell, 1972, Nelson, 1969, Swatos, 1981), have made serious efforts to academically 'purge' the negative connotations of the concept of cult. In an effort to avoid the theoretical pitfall of classifying all cults

as ephemeral, Nelson has posited three types of cults. The criteria he utilizes to describe a cult encompass some of the earlier formulations. Nelson's (1969) contribution is that cult members have to experience a mystical or ecstatic state of consciousness. Nelson also states that cults emerge from a split with the traditional religious system, and therefore, the content of the cult's belief system tends to be radically different from that of the traditional religious institution.

While it may be true that the Rastafarian belief system differs radically from traditional Christianity as practiced in the Anglican, Baptist, or Methodist churches in Jamaica, a closer examination of the Jamaican religious milieu reveals that the influence of Christianity, in this form, amongst the lower class blacks is not unrivalled. Rather, other religious groups embodying an Afro-Christian syncretism are strong competitors for members and exercise influence amongst this sector of the population. The fact that such diverse religious and quasi-religious groups existed prior to the genesis of the Rastafarian movement raises the issue that if Rastafarianism emerged as a result of a sharp break, what then did it 'split' from?

While an overall labelling of the Rastafarian movement as a cult is prevalent in the literature on the movement, it can be argued that this label of 'cult' is clearly a misnomer when used to describe the movement as a whole. Yet, 'cultic' features are apparent within some sectors of the movement, especially

considering the individualistic nature of the conversion process, and the freedom of interpretation and commitment on the part of the membership. In this respect, the Rastafarian movement seems to contain certain sectarian features and other cultic features, which places the movement as a whole somewhere in the middle of the cult-sect continuum; the latter being based on the degree of organization and definition of group boundaries.

There are several other theoretical formulations which approach the typologies of religious organizations from different points of departure. An example is Berger's treatment of the sect-church typology from a phenomenological perspective (Hill, 1973). Berger (1954, 1958), bases his typology on the inner meaning and significance that participants attribute to and derive from religious phenomena. According to him, the sect represents an orientation towards religious phenomena as being immediate and as prevailing in all religious gatherings. The church, by contrast, is defined on the basis that the religious 'spirit' is felt to be remote. Berger, views the sect as being closer to the 'sacred' core of religious belief, and the church as being closer to the 'profane' and secular character of the world at large (Hill, 1973). Berger also states that while the sect contains an inner locus of personal charismatic authority, the church embodies an office type of charismatic authority. While Berger's ideal typical sect is based on the Weberian model, this distinction between the 'sacred' and 'profane'

situates the Rastafarian movement closer to the ideal type of sect. The Rastafarians are constantly referring to the 'spirit of Jah' as being the guiding force in their lives, as well as prevailing, in an immediate sense, in their rituals and gatherings.

The theory of relative deprivation has also been utilized by sociologists of religion to explain the appearance of different types of religious organizations. Glock and Stark (1969) delineate five distinct types of deprivation which result in membership affiliation with four different types of religious organizations. Hence, the type of deprivation suffered by an individual or group leads to a subsequent affiliation with the type of religious organization that caters to that deprivation. With reference to the formation of sects and cults, Glock and Stark maintain that economic deprivation is responsible for the emergence of sects, while 'psychic' deprivation is a major determinant for the formation of cults (Wallis, 1975). In the case of the Rastafarians, the historical account outlined earlier demonstrates that the blacks in Jamaica during the 1930's faced both economic and psychic deprivation. If one were to accept the rather mechanistic theory advanced by Glock and Stark, the Rastafarian movement should approximate to both the ideal type of sect and cult. The fact that the movement exhibits the characteristics of sect and cult types of religious organizations demonstrates the co-existence of these deprivations in social reality.

Within the movement in Jamaica and England, there is also a degree of membership affiliation with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The latter is not a Rastafarian institution as such, but claims Rastafarians as part of the total membership. The branch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Jamaica was formed as a result of one of the recommendations of the 1960 report. In terms of the typologies of religious organizations, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church approximates the ideal type of denomination. It does not claim to have monopoly over salvation, is fairly tolerant of other religious groups in society, and generally displays a reformist stance (Martin, 1962). It is clear from the Rastafarians, who attend the services of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, that they attach their own subjective interpretations to these services.²

An examination of the literature on the Rastafarian movement reveals that the Rastafarian tradition contains various groups that approximate the ideal types of cult and sect. While the movement as a whole, does not approach the ideal types of either sect or cult, the various subgroups extant in the movement manifest ideal typical features of specific types of religious organizations as the cult and sect. The question then remains as to which type of religious organization serves best

² Informal conversations with Rastafarians in Montego Bay and Kingston, reveals that affiliation with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, represents to these members a direct connection with the Emperor Haile Selassie. Personal observations also indicate that the level of commitment expressed by these members resembles the deep commitment of most sectarians to their particular religious group. (Jamaica, July, 1983).

to describe the Rastafarian movement as a whole while still taking into consideration the existence of the various subgroups within it.

In addition to the ideal types of sect and cult, there are several other typologies which deal with the process of change from one type of religious organization to another. Wallis (1975), attributes the transition from cults to sects as resulting from a shift in the locus of authority from that which is located externally to the group to an internal locus of authority. The presence of competing and interpenetrating religious organizations within one group has been ascribed to this process of transition from one type of religious organization to another (e.g. Ischie, 1967). The assumption is that it is only during this process of transition that competing organizational forms emerge, and that over a period of time, as the process of change comes to an end, these competing forms merge into one resulting type of religious organization.

It can be argued, on this basis, that the Rastafarian movement manifests various types of competing religious organizations as a function of its transition from a cult to a sect. On the other hand, a religious tradition may give rise to varying forms of organizations which do not necessarily merge into one monolithic entity. In the case of the Rastafarian movement, some of these precipitating forms have survived over the last forty years, and in some cases have developed into other organizational forms independent of the movement as a

whole.

A rather recent and relatively untested concept has emerged in the literature on the typologies of religious organizations which potentially serves as an heuristic device in apprehending the social reality of the Rastafarian movement. This is the concept of the 'mystic collectivity' as advanced by Campbell (1977). This concept ties together the religion of mysticism as formulated by Troeltsch, and the concept of social collectivities as advanced by Parsons and Merton amongst others. However, in formulating the concept of the mystic collectivity, Campbell has applied a specific interpretation to Troeltsch's original formulation of mysticism. The latter, according to Troeltsch, constituted a stream of religious thought, which resided within a particular religious belief system and which could, under certain circumstances, break off from the traditional religion and establish itself as a comprehensive body of thought and a systematized set of beliefs, e.g. the Hindu mystical beliefs of the Brahmins, the Sufi thought of the Persian Muslims, and the mystical beliefs of the Dominican and Fransican Orders. In its widest sense, Troeltsch argued that mysticism was a universal phenomenon. Campbell's use of mysticism is derived from the following account on 'Mysticism and the Philosophy of Religion' given by Troeltsch:

...mysticism realizes that it is an independent religious principle; it sees itself as the real universal heart of all religion, of which the various myth-forms are merely an outer garment. It regards itself as the means of restoring an immediate union with God; it feels independent of all institutional religion,

and possesses an entire inward certainty, which makes it indifferent towards every kind of religious fellowship. This is its fundamental attitude; it does not vary whether the mystic adheres externally to the religious community or not. Henceforward union with God, deification, self-annihilation, becomes the real and only subject of religion. (1960:734, my emphasis).

Troeltsch adds that this mystical orientation becomes concrete when it is accompanied by a systematic body of beliefs explaining the elements of causation, process and completion. This implies the development of a body of thought dealing with a theoretical framework outlining the reasons for the initial estrangement from God, the process whereby union can be achieved, and the content/experience of this final goal of union. The development of such a body of thought culminates with the emergence of that mystical thought as an independent religious philosophy, and thus becomes,

...independent of concrete popular religion, timeless and nonhistorical, at most concealed under historical symbols, the only valid interpretation of the religious process, under whatever form it may be clothed. (1960:735).

Mysticism, as outlined above, aptly describes the general tenor of the Rastafarian belief system, the only different factor being that 'union' is perceived as being terrestrial and via geographic proximity to the messiah. The Rastafarians already claim that they are in constant touch with the spirit of Jah. Nonetheless, while the Rastafarian belief system is closely akin to that of Troeltsch's concept of mystical thought, the movement as a whole displays other characteristics which are best described by the concept of social collectivities. The lack of a need for fellowship, which Troeltsch pointed out, is absent

within the Rastafarian movement. Yet, Troeltsch recognized that the 'human frailty' for companionship was present even in the mystic, resulting in the formation of some sort of loosely organized groups. Nonetheless, the degree of organization between these members of the 'invisible church' was low and ephemeral, and whatever interaction occurred, was motivated purely on the grounds of basic human needs and other secular considerations.

Whatever organized forms it (mysticism) does adopt are loose and provisional, mere concessions to human frailty, without any sense of inward necessity and Divine inspiration. Its individualism, therefore, differs entirely from that of the sect... Instead there is simply a parallelism of spontaneous religious personalities, whose only bond of union is their common Divine origin, their common spirit of love, and their union in God, which is the free and invisible work of the Divine Spirit. (Troeltsch, 1960:744).

While the Rastafarian movement does contain groups which can be described as resulting from 'a parallelism of spontaneous religious personalities', there are other groups within the movement which are highly organized and tightly bound. Yet the Rastafarian belief system is highly permeated with the elements of mystical thought as identified by Troeltsch. However, the historical experience of slavery and colonialism is a crucial factor in the belief system of the movement, and a vital factor in its eschatological expectations (i.e. the final reversal in power between the blacks and the whites). Even the persecution suffered by the brethren serves to unite them in groups which are not as loosely bound as Troeltsch's concept of mysticism seems to suggest. However, Troeltsch was discussing pure forms

in much the same vein as Weber's conceptual tools of ideal types. Yet, the picture that emerges from Troeltsch's discussion of mysticism is that the latter is other-worldly in its orientation, and moreover, abstract in its body of beliefs.

Campbell, drawing from Troeltsch, argues that although mysticism in and of itself does not result in the formation of groups and organizations, it does result in the formation of collectivities. These he defines as:

...consist [ing] of those people who have a sense of solidarity by virtue of shared common values and who have also acquired an attendant sense of moral obligation to fulfill common role expectations. Clearly the adherents to spiritual and mystic religion constitute just such a collectivity in that they share common values - derived from a common weltanschauung - a common definition of their religious 'duties'.
(1977:385).

Campbell has thus married the concepts of mysticism and social collectivities in his concept of the 'mystic collectivity'. This he goes on to describe as being bound by a common religious world-view, common role expectations, sense of duty and common beliefs. He states that while the collectivity is bound by these common denominators, the degree of interpersonal interaction and cohesiveness does not resemble other tightly organized groups such as sects. Rather, Campbell argues that within this collectivity, only a portion maybe involved in 'direct' communication, the rest of the membership is involved in 'indirect' communication, "...of the kind mediated by their readership of the same books and magazines." (1977:385).

The most interesting aspect of Campbell's argument is his insistence that the mystic collectivity can form a base for the formation of other groups which may be precipitated from this collectivity by other factors, and which may over time either merge back into the substratum of this collectivity or die out. Extending this line of argument even further, the mystic collectivity may be used to describe an overall loosely organized religious tradition held together by the common denominators of world-view, belief system, and role expectations, but which harbours within it several other organizational forms which may approximate to the ideal types of sects and cults.

In the following chapter, an attempt will be made to assess the utility of this concept of mystic collectivity in relation to Rastafarianism and its utility in providing a better and more comprehensive analysis of the forms of Jah (the various organizations precipitated from the movement which are based on the worship of the Rastafarian deity Haile Selassie).

In the preceding discussion of the ideal types of sect and cult, an attempt was made to determine their utility in an analysis of Rastafarianism. While the aim was not to seek for an exact 'fit' between this facet of social reality and the type construct, it was found that Rastafarianism in its totality did not approximate to the ideal type of sect or cult. Rather, it is apparent from this discussion that the various subgroups extant in the movement approach more closely the ideal types of sect

and cult. A relatively recent contribution to typological discussions of the varying forms of religious beliefs and institutions exhibits potential in describing and providing a more comprehensive analysis of the Rastafarian movement and the varying organizational forms within it. The following chapter entails the utilization of this concept of the mystic collectivity in relation to the Rastafarian tradition.

IV. The Mystic Collectivity of the Rastafarians

Since the formation of the movement in the early 1930s, there have been several subgroups extant within it. Some of these groups have been tightly organized along secular lines, having a president, secretary, etc. (Simpson, 1955a, 1955b). Others, have manifested communitarian types of organization such as Howell's commune - Pinnacle (Barrett, 1977), and Prince Emmanuel's community of the Bobo Shantis (McPherson, 1983). These subgroups also vary in terms of their orientation and interpretation of the Rastafarian tradition. It is apparent from an examination of the literature on the Rastafarians that two dominant orientations exist in the movement. These can generally be defined as the political and the religious orientations (Albuquerque, 1977).

The movement can be conceptualized as a continuum of groups. One extreme of this continuum is occupied with the purely politically oriented groups which are affiliated with the Rastafarian movement, while at the other end are the strictly religious groups, mobilized around a more messianic interpretation of the Rastafarian belief system. Examples of extremist groups would be the Rastafarian Movement Association at the political end of the spectrum, and the Order of the Nyahbinghi at the religious end of the spectrum. Between these two extremes, there are several other variant interpretations

extant within the Rastafarian movement. However, what must be emphasized is that the variability and sophistication of this continuum differs in other areas of the world. The present discussion of this broad range of interpretations is drawn from the Jamaican variant of the movement. An examination of these varying interpretations within the movement in Jamaica is of particular importance since the movement's spread and survival in other parts of the world is, to a large extent, influenced by factors occurring in the Jamaican form of Rastafarianism.

Within the Rastafarian movement, there are groups that perceive Haile Selassie as the Son of God, rather than the divine Godhead Himself; there are others that treat Haile Selassie as Jah Himself; and there are those that perceive themselves as being 'Children of Jah', rather than Rastafarians. Aside from these differences in interpretations, there are individuals that are closely affiliated with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, still others form the core of the Nyahbinghi Order, some Rastafarians belong to the 'politically' oriented groups such as the Rastafarian Movement Association, while some individuals refuse to align themselves with any formally organized group. Finally, there are individuals who style themselves as Rastafarians, but who fail to exhibit the behaviour patterns dictated by the Rastafarian belief system.

In terms of the external signs of identification and affiliation with the movement, there are Rastafarians who wear dreadlocks, eat Ital food, engage in the ritualized consumption

of marijuana, and read the bible. In general, there are some individuals within the movement that follow all the rules prescribed by the Rastafarian livity. However, there are other Rastafarians who exhibit none of these external symbols of identification. Even with respect to the prohibition regarding food, clothing and attitude, there are brethren who refuse to eat any form of flesh, whether it be fish, poultry, or meat. Then there are those brethren who compromise and include fish in their diet. With respect to smoking ganja, there are individual Rastafarians who consume ganja in a variety of ways, i.e. in food, teas and through smoking. There are other brethren who refuse to burn ganja and consume it primarily through cooking it in the food and brewing it. Still other Rastafarians completely abstain from ganja consumption, although this is uncommon. ¹. This list of variations is far from complete and applies to virtually every aspect of the Rastafarian livity and belief system.

Nonetheless, there are some aspects of Rastafarianism which are common to all these groups. These include the wearing of the Ethiopian colours, red, gold and green; the common attraction to Reggae music; and the common usage of the Rastafarian dialect - Ilect. Insofar as the dietary laws are concerned, the Rastafarians abstain from eating pork, This is the only

¹Kitzinger's studies on the Rastafarian movement (1966, 1969), are the only sources which make this observation. In most cases, however, the use of marijuana has been considered as being synonymous with Rastafarianism

universal food prohibition in effect.

The underlying basis of commonality is rooted in a definable Rastafarian attitudinal complex. Common attitudes include a tendency towards the natural as opposed to the synthetic or processed elements of any phenomenon; and furthermore, an ingrained belief in the superiority of Rastafarianism which translates into a self conception of being one of the 'elect' or 'remnant' of God, and a fundamental belief in the superiority of the black race. The problematic aspect of these common denominators is the response they stimulate in the rest of society which is to a large degree anti-Rasta. So, although Rastafarian argot is used as a fashionable instrument by the Jamaican youth to show that they are 'cool', the overall attitude towards the Rastafarians is negative at best. There is no doubt that the use of Ital food, Reggae music, clothes and other apparel bearing the Ethiopian colours, and the penetration of the llect into colloquial speech is the result of the government's cooptation policies designed to drain the millennial fervour of the movement by making it one of Jamaica's tourist attractions. Yet, in a sense, this cooptation device has also served another purpose. It has made the organized Rastafarian groups wary of individuals who utilize the movement's belief system, and its symbols of identification for personal ends. Thus, some of these subgroups have clearly defined their boundaries, admitting only members and associates who are familiar. Nonetheless, the solidarity between the

different subgroups and between individual Rastafarians is undeniable. Usually, a Rastafarian is able to discern the authenticity of another Rastafarian by 'reasoning' with him. This process of interaction involves a type of informal testing of the person's knowledge about the belief system and his position on certain controversial issues such as birth control, death, aspects of the livity, etc.

In the widest sense of the term, the Rastafarians can be classified as a social collectivity. However, in a narrow and specific sense, Rastafarianism constitutes more than a social collectivity for the very reason that individuals and groups do interact with each other and are spread out in terms of geographical distance. In this light, Rastafarian groups and individuals in other parts of the world have a strong link of communication with groups in Jamaica. That these links are not based just on primary relationships nurtured over long period of time and as a function of kinship or other ties is clearly apparent from observations and the literature. The unequivocal attempts to 'collectivize' the movement through such mechanisms as international congresses and widely publicized ritualistic events points to an inherent need of the Rastafarian international community to establish group boundaries and enhance group solidarity. The constant process of 'fusion and fission' of groups within this collectivity also illustrates the complexity of the Rastafarian movement and reflects the high level of interaction between individuals and groups, which in

itself is a precondition for this process of 'fission and fusion'. Even the diffusion of the Rastafarian tradition, which though it has been facilitated by the publication of literature on the movement, is a function of this network of interactions and communication within the Rastafarian community as a whole.

It is apparent from the literature on the Rastafarians that while variations in interpretations exist and are mobilized in the form of groups - each espousing a specific interpretation and orientation - the root of their beliefs and orientations can be traced to one common source, i.e. the belief system. The belief system is a mystical one, in Troeltsch's sense, given the emphasis on individuality and a system of thought expounding a causal, processual and final goal of redemption. Yet, modifications of the Troeltschean concept of mysticism are in effect here especially in light of the collective concept of salvation operative in the Rastafarian tradition, the terrestrial and this-worldly nature of the final redemption, and the underlying historical experience incorporated into the belief system. Furthermore, the concrete manifestation of Troeltsch's notion of 'human frailties' is taken to an extreme in the Rastafarian case with the multiple groups extant within the movement.

It is in this regard that Campbell's integrated concept of the mystic collectivity is relevant to an understanding of the Rastafarian movement. The mystic collectivity of the Rastafarians can then be understood as a collectivity {in the

loose sense of the term) which is bound by a mystical religious philosophy. While the need for interaction between members is not required, the fact that it exists is incorporated in this concept of the mystic collectivity. Moreover, according to Campbell:

The religious cult, therefore (as opposed to the secular therapeutic cult) is to be seen as an extrusion, precipitated in all probability by some secular consideration, from the substratum of this collectivity; one which does not happen to occur within the confines of the existing religious organization, and will, in all probability, dissolve before long back into the collectivity once again. (1977:386)

This then describes the constant process of fusion and fission which occurs between and in groups in the movement. The concept of the mystic collectivity also describes the extrusion of groups within the Rastafarian movement, given that the large majority of these groups embody an orientation which is quite different from the messianic nature of the belief system. This is apparent in the politically oriented groups which engage in active measures to change the situation of the oppressed, and promote repatriation via governmental state mechanisms of migration. The religious belief system, by contrast, is centred on a messianic interpretation of repatriation. Other groups, expounding a more cultural interpretation of Rastafarianism, also emerge as a result of this 'extrusion' from the collectivity. Thus, Campbell's ideal typical concept of the mystic collectivity is broadly applicable to the Rastafarian movement.

Campbell's concept of mysticism is largely drawn from that of Troeltsch. The preceding discussion of Troeltsch's original concept of mysticism revealed that while the nature of mystical thought is in some form correlated to the Rastafarian mystical thought, the latter diverges significantly from mysticism in its ideal typical form. An inherent feature in Troeltsch's concept of mysticism is the syncretistic attitude of the mystic in considering all paths to have the same validity and to lead to the same source (in other words, the mystical religion is a plurally legitimated one). The Rastafarian movement derives from a belief system which is considered to be uniquely legitimate by its adherents. In other words, the Rastafarians perceive it to be the only true path to salvation. Other paths to salvation are not recognized as being valid, and are treated with considerable hostility by the Rastafarians. This aspect of Rastafarianism differentiates it from the pure type of mysticism formulated by Troeltsch. Yet, there are elements of mystical religion which do correspond with certain features of the Rastafarian belief system. For example, the Rastafarian belief that external rituals and forms of worship are not necessary given that the body is the true church of the soul; the belief that Haile Selassie is in constant spiritual communication with them; the denial of external rituals sanctifying birth, marriage and death; the conception of union with the Divine involving both a spiritual and material dimension. In addition, the Rastafarian process of conversion is highly 'mystical' since it is not

legitimated by an external source of authority, and is an inborn conversion by the individual coming to recognize the divine element within himself (Cashmore, 1977, Owens, 1976).

From the above discussion, it can be seen that Rastafarianism constitutes a mystical religion, but a mystical belief system not fully of the kind formulated by Troeltsch. Similarly, the Rastafarian movement can be described as a collectivity in Campbell's use of the term, but a collectivity with a greater degree of interaction which is both covert and overt.² Two main features of the mystic collectivity correspond with the features of the Rastafarian movement. These are the common denominators that bind the movement, and the various subgroups that co-exist within the Rastafarian collectivity. The major source of solidarity and cohesiveness are the basic underlying attitudes of the Rastafarians, the common attraction to the music, the use of the Rastafarian argot, and the identification with Ethiopia, and more generally Africa symbolized through the use of the Ethiopian colours and other African apparel and ornaments. The degree of cohesiveness exerted by these various factors is contingent upon the individual Rastafarian's commitment to the belief system. The higher the degree of commitment expressed by the individual, the

²This refers to the process whereby individuals are chosen to join particular religious groups especially with regards to participating in the inner rites and rituals of such groups. The individual's behaviour is observed covertly by other Rastafarians who then decide on the suitability of the individual for his potential role in the group.

more apparent is his affiliation to the belief system via such signs as wearing of dreadlocks, participation in the religious core groups, and a closer reflection of the Rastafarian livity in his daily life.

The specific attitudinal complex common to all Rastafarians can be traced to the Rastafarian belief system and the common experience of oppression. There are several common attitudes characteristic of all Rastafarians. The Rastafarians stress the natural in all aspects of their livity. The natural represents a purity which is untouched by the power of the external, profane world, coined as 'Babylon'. Thus, no matter what the degree of commitment is, the 'natural' is stressed in a variety of ways. In the extreme, the tendency towards 'natural' translates into food prohibitions regarding anything processed, the use of natural rain water for washing, rather than water which is processed; an insistence on natural methods of birth control and child bearing; restriction of social interactions with brethren rather than with outsiders; participation in communal living in Rastafarian communes; rural residence rather than urban living; a denial of any type of verbal or nonverbal contact with the outside world; and generally a type of retreatist tendency with respect to the rest of society. Combined with this emphasis on the 'natural', the Rastafarians place repatriation as the primary goal in their lives. On a general level, repatriation becomes subjectively defined as either a physical migration to Africa, facilitated by the cooperation of heads of governments or a

spiritual migration to Africa - where Africa then becomes a subjective and spiritual state of mind - an internal 'Zion'; or, a more messianic interpretation of repatriation as being instituted by divine fiat, and carried out en masse. The variations of this theme abound amongst the different Rastafarian groups, some stressing the more secular and practical aspects of such a move, others emphasizing the more spiritual and subjective nature of this goal of salvation.

Nonetheless, for all Rastafarians, Africa, and more particularly Ethiopia, holds a powerful attraction. Deriving from this special position accorded to Africa, Rastafarians, as a whole, are attracted to all things African. These may range from tribal costumes, art, dance, music, food, history, etc. Thus, the issue of African liberation, is of considerable importance to the Rastafarians in light of their own attachment to the African continent as their 'heartland'. Concomitantly, the significance attributed to Haile Selassie, while not uniform amongst the Rastafarians, is accorded a degree of 'sacredness' by virtue of his leadership, his line of descent which is traced to Solomon and Sheba, and his position as Africa's first king and emperor of the oldest, and only 'uncolonized' nation in the Africa continent.

The common historical experience of 'dread' (Nettleford, 1972, Owens, 1976), is also a major factor binding the movement. Essentially, this experience of common oppression and persecution is intimately tied in with the Rastafarian worldview

which is dichotomous in terms of the negative forces of Babylon, and the positive forces of Jah. This has been conceptualized by Cashmore (1979) as the 'Babylonian conspiracy' No matter where the individual Rastafarian is located on the scale of the degree of commitment, or where he is geographically located, i.e. in Jamaica, England, or Canada, this duality in the worldview is utilized to explain world events and local incidents.

This worldview stems from the belief system which confers on the Rastafarians the status of the 'elect of God'. And, inherent in the belief system is a conviction that, as in the past, the true Israelites will have to suffer persecution as a result of their belief in Jah, and as a function of their defiance and refusal to cooperate with the powers of Babylon (the state religious and governmental institutions). The Rastafarian cry 'death to all black and white oppressors' reflects this common denominator of a historical experience of oppression brought on by slavery and colonization. The dominance of these themes of slavery and oppression in Rastafarian reasoning session is also an indication of the communal nature of this experience (Owens, 1976).

The Rastafarian worldview is also biblical in nature. The biblical nature of this worldview is also apparent from the content of most of the verbal exchanges between Rastafarians and nonRastafarians. Not only is the content of this interaction punctuated with quotations of passages from the bible, but the whole style of speech is rooted in the archaic and dramatic

tradition of the bible. Interactions begin with short prayers to the Rastafarian deity, are filled with references either to biblical events, or interjections of the names of Haile Selassie, and end with a short prayer to the deity. The very style of speech is anchored in the bible and is filled with references to the psalms, the book of Revelations, and other sources which contribute to the Rastafarian exegesis. The degree of this biblical integration is dependent on the degree of commitment expressed by the individual Rastafarian. However, the common speech idiosyncrasy of the all Rastafarians is their tendency to inject a litany of standard praises and titles after the name of Haile Selassie. Thus, the Emperor's name would usually be articulated in the following manner: 'In the name of His Imperial Majesty, Negus I, Ras Tafari, Selassie I, Jahoi, The Lion of Judah, The Beginning and End, Everliving Selassie I'³. This is applicable even amongst those Rastafarians that interpret the position of Haile Selassie in a different manner (see Owens, 1976). The content of speech within the Rastafarian tradition is also interlaced with references to current international figures as representing biblical personalities. Hence, the Pope is seen as the Anti-Christ, Queen Elizabeth epitomizes the 'whore of Babylon', and Reagan is perceived as the false prophet. While such specific identifications are restricted to those Rastafarians highly committed to their

³ from personal conversation with Rastafarians in Vancouver, Canada, and Kingston, Jamaica.

faith, the perception of the wider world through this biblical worldview is common to virtually all Rastafarians.

Intimately related to this biblical worldview is the common usage of the Rastafarian argot (I-lect). While the complete penetration of this argot into the everyday speech patterns of the adherents varies, certain common words are universal to all Rastafarians. Specifically, these include the words 'I and I', 'I man', 'Babylon', 'Jah', 'Seen', etc. (Cashmore, 1979, Owens, 1976, Wilson, 1978). The diffusion of these words is carried out primarily through Reggae music and popular Rastafarian publications, such as The Rasta Voice, Rastafari Speaks (two Rastafarian newspapers). Rastafarian argot is also perpetuated and innovated through reasoning sessions. This peculiar style of collective discussion is also a common denominator amongst all Rastafarians. Evidence of this type of communal 'reasoning' is apparent from studies of the Rastafarian movement in England (Cashmore, 1979), Canada (Wilson, 1978), and the Caribbean (e.g. Campbell, 1980, Owens, 1976, and Yawney, 1979). Personal observations of the Rastafarians in Vancouver, Canada, and Kingston, Jamaica, also confirms this finding.

Aside from these factors of a common worldview, and a common attitudinal complex, the other influential factor universal amongst the Rastafarians is the love for Reggae music. The prevalent use of this music as a medium for the Rastafarian message is well documented in several studies (e.g. Cashmore, 1979, Clarke, 1980, Shibata, 1981). The evolution of a highly

specific Rastafarian style of music has been traced to the mid 1940's. Until then, the Rastafarians engaged in playing musical instruments from a wide variety of sources, and which were common to other religious groups in Jamaica such as the Revivalists. However, the importance of drumming was clear even from the early phase of the movement. The Rastafarians took from the Burro people, another Jamaican ghetto subculture, their style and patterns of drumming, which the Rastafarians then combined with their religious chants and prayers. However, the commercialization of the music, after it had evolved through several stages, i.e. from mento, ska, rock steady to Reggae, perpetuated the style of the latter, although in a totally different form than the original. Reggae music, in its current state, does not conform to the beat and drumming pattern of the Rastafarian music used in religious ceremonies of the movement⁴. (Shibata, 1981). Nonetheless, practically all the different Rastafarian groups have music at their congregational gatherings (i.e. the Binghis). However, this music is usually in the form of highly specific drumming sequences. In this sense, the music, although different from contemporary Reggae music, serves as a unifying force within the movement.

The most important factor in the Reggae music is its content. The latter is primarily filled with Rastafarian rhetoric regarding the eschatological expectations of the

⁴ There are some exceptions to this general pattern, especially in terms of the early recordings

movement, the belief in Haile Selassie as the personification of God, and the impending repatriation of all Jah's children to Africa, and Ethiopia in particular. Included in this list of items is the issue of persecution, emphasizing the role of the brethren as 'true Israelites' and 'Nazarenes' who have to suffer persecution as a consequence of their beliefs is also depicted, quite dramatically, in the content of Reggae songs. Even biblical accounts of historical events are to be found in these songs, e.g. the story of Jonah and the Whale. It is this biblical and wholly Rastafarian content of Reggae music that makes it acceptable to even the elders of the movement who are strongly opposed to Reggae musicians.

Within the movement, the musicians are accorded special status and are known as 'the players of instruments'. Yet, the religious core of the movement, i.e. the elders and members of the Order of the Nyahbinghi have expressed disapproval of the musicians, and have even gone so far as to outrightly deny them as being Rastafarians (McPherson, 1983). The reason for this outright condemnation lies in the role Reggae musicians have played in terms of disseminating Rastafarian doctrine through their music to primarily white producers and the outside world audience. At the same time, very few of these musicians have channelled the profits of their ventures into the Rastafarian community, and this has led to some amount of resentment on the part of the elders, some of whom have been around since the inception of the movement.

While Reggae music is an 'extroverted' expression of the Rastafarian faith, 'Nyahbinghi' drumming is an introverted and more ritualistic expression of Rastafarianism. 'Nyahbinghi' music is played at all the ritual gatherings of the Rastafarians. These are in themselves called 'binghis' or 'Nyahbinghis'. This type of music is largely composed of drum sequences which are very specific. In a 'Nyahbinghi' gathering, the drums are located at specific points in the circle. The adherents gather around in the circle. In the middle of the circle is the 'fire key', which is a kind of 'bonfire' constructed with wood. The fundeh drum, a Repeater drum, and a Bass drum compose the basic instruments. In addition, the percussions in the form of 'Shakkas' or 'maracas' are used. The chants are recited from one corner of this circle (Shibata, 1981). Chanting and dancing goes on all night in a binghi ceremony. The Rastafarians attach a mystical symbolism to the drums, claiming that the power of the drums, if they are played right, can evoke mystical powers which could destroy the world.

⁵ While Reggae music is an extroverted expression of Rastafarianism, it still draws its inspiration from the inner core of the Rastafarian movement, i.e the Nyahbinghi Order .

Another common feature amongst all Rastafarians, and one which stems from their prescribed livity is the consumption of

⁵ One Rastafarian stated that only the Indian race could come close to emulating the drumming sequence of the Nyahbinghi, and in this sense, it is only the Indians, who if they so desired, could bring about the destruction of the Rastafarians (personal communication, Jamaica, July, 1983)

ganja, the latter also being viewed as a sacred gift from God. The observation that not all Rastafarians consume marijuana has only been mentioned in Kitzinger's studies of the movement (1966, 1969). However, the recent literature on the movement indicates that this social practice is universal amongst all Rastafarian groups (Cashmore, 1977, McPherson, 1982, 1983). For the purposes of the present study, the ritualized intake of marijuana can be considered as one additional common denominator of the mystic collectivity of the Rastafarians. Moreover, early articles of the movement, in magazines and newspapers, also indicate that much of the early persecution inflicted on the brethren was a result of their cultivation and consumption of this 'dangerous drug' (Barrett, 1977). As has been noted, the literature on the Rastafarians reveals that they consider marijuana to be highly mystical and a source of their conviction in Jah. Variations do exist with regard to the method of consumption. Thus, the use of marijuana can be considered to be a universal phenomenon amongst the Rastafarians. The recent court case regarding the legitimization of this drug in the United States was undertaken by the Coptic Rastafarians, another group within the movement, and was based on the sacramental use of the drug in Rastafarian rituals and reasoning sessions (Cashmore, 1977).

It can be summarized then, that while variations do exist within the movement regarding these common denominators, the Rastafarian movement is bound by the commonality of the

worldview and the attitudinal complex which are clearly derived from the common belief system. In addition, the ritualized intake of marijuana, the 'reasoning' sessions, and the common attraction to Reggae music serve to bind the disparate factions of the movement together, thus creating a sense of unity and solidarity. The following discussion will centre on the second major characteristic of the mystic collectivity of the Rastafarians, i.e. the different groups co-existing in the movement.

The Many Mansions of Rastafari

The historical profile of the movement (see chapter one) reveals that even in its early phase, the Rastafarian movement contained various subgroups. Some of these groups were structured in a formally organized manner (Simpson, 1955a, 1955b). Others were more loosely organized and ephemeral (McPherson, 1983). Many researchers have commented on the propensity for 'fission and fusion' in the movement (e.g. Smith et.al, 1960, Yawney, 1979). However, it can be argued that since the Rastafarian movement has the features of a mystic collectivity, the constant generation and disintegration of groups stems from the substratum of this collectivity.

The nature of the groups that have emerged from the Rastafarian collectivity can be categorized in terms of the two dominant orientations present within the movement, i.e. the

political and the religious (Albuquerque, 1977). There is, however, a third stream of thought which has emerged relatively recently, and which can be classified as a 'cultural' interpretation of Rastafarianism (Nettleford, 1972). The latter is nonetheless closely aligned in terms of group affiliation with the political wing of the movement. These different streams of thought have found expression in the form of specific groups. Hence, an organization such as the Order of the Nyahbinghi incorporates and represents the religious and messianic interpretation of Rastafarianism. In contrast, the Rastafarian Movement Association embodies a political orientation. Within this general dichotomy, varying degrees of political and religious collective expressions exist.

Membership in any group is contingent on the individual's level of commitment and interpretation of Rastafarianism. However, this spectrum of varying interpretations which are collectively expressed in the various groups is most apparent in the Jamaican context of Rastafarianism. In other parts of the Caribbean, England, Canada, and the United States, this variation in groups is limited. That these groups express specific orientations and interpretations of the Rastafarian doctrine is evident from their position on issues which have a direct bearing on the movement, e.g. the issue of repatriation, and more generally, their attitude towards the world, and their conception of salvation. It is interesting to note that the differentiating factors of attitude to the world and concept of

salvation are also the criteria used to differentiate sectarian groups (Wilson, 1970).

Thus, the more political groups espouse a this-worldly but practical interpretation of salvation through repatriation, and interestingly enough, a 'Marxist' analysis of the factors perpetuating the oppression of the black race. The religious groups are fervent in their belief in the impending Armageddon and the coming of Haile Selassie to rescue the 'chosen ones'. The religious groups within the movement resemble the ideal type of such religious organizations as the 'cult' and 'sect'.

While a fair amount of rivalry and competition exists between these various groups, ⁶ an inner core of the movement does exist. Contrary to most of the literature on the movement (e.g. Barrett, 1968, 1977, Kitzinger, 1966, 1969, Nicholas, 1979, Owens, 1976, Simpson, 1955a, 1955b, Smith et.al 1960) which has recognized the variety of groups extant within the Rastafarian movement, the fact that the movement contained a core group which historically played a major role in influencing the direction of the movement's belief system, and its relations with the state, has scarcely been mentioned (McPherson, 1982, 1983). In part, this oversight on the part of the researchers can be attributed to the retreatist position adopted by this group in the last two decades (McPherson, 1983). Other religious groups within the movement are, to a large degree, the result of

⁶ This is apparent from personal observations of the movement in Jamaica, July, 1983.

schisms from this group based on personality conflicts between leading members, and contention over religious rites and practices, e.g. the wearing of dreadlocks which was a key issue in the late 1940's and which culminated in the formation of various other groups.

This inner core of the movement is known as the Order of the Nyahbinghi. The name 'Nyahbinghi' was originally derived, by the group members, from an article published in the Jamaica Times by a Frederick Philos, who claimed that the Nyahbinghi group was composed of approximately twenty thousand individuals, under the leadership of Emperor Haile Selassie. This article was published in 1935, and it is generally assumed that the group derived its name from this publication, especially since the goal of both groups was the end of white domination and oppression. Initially, the Order of the Nyahbinghi was called the House of the Youth Black Faith. It is interesting to note that the name Nyahbinghi appears in the literate world in a description of a religious movement in a corner of Uganda, E. Africa. The movement, in this context, also had a similar aim - that is the overthrowing of colonial power. 'Nyahbinghi' was the name of the Queen who led this group, and to whom the local population attributed magical powers (Albuquerque, 1977, Barrett, 1968, 1977, Nettleford, 1973).

Contrary to the loose organization attributed to these early groups, the House of the Youth Black Faith displayed a high level of organization even in its early days. The head of

the group was called the 'Akee' man. In addition, the group allocated one individual as the 'Table man', whose function it was to read out prayers and other information pertaining to the movement and the group. Meetings were highly organized as well as being held on specified days. At this time in the movement's history, street meetings were common amongst most of the Rastafarian groups. This device of holding meetings in public served a two-fold purpose. On the one hand, it allowed members to preach to large numbers of people who could not be accommodated in the small dwellings of the membership. On the other hand, these public meetings allowed for the spread of the Rastafarian message when no other means of disseminating information were available to these adherents. However, these street meetings also became the primary causes of the persecution inflicted on the brethren. Since these meetings were open to the public, they were constantly being infiltrated by informants from the government. It was in this manner that Howell was arrested on charges of preaching sedition (McPherson, 1982, 1983). Within the Order of the Nyahbinghi, the previously loosely structured theology of Rastafarianism became more concrete and complex. Specific days were set aside for fasting. Certain rites required members who were deeply committed to the faith. Some rituals and key positions required members to be celibate and generally refrain from the polluting aspects of the world (McPherson, 1982, 1983).

The Rastafarian theology, it must be noted, was even in its early stage quite complex; especially since the founders of the movement had fused their own previous religious beliefs with it. The publication of the Promised Key in the 1930's reveals the special injunctions regarding fasting and other related rituals. However, the articulation of this theology varies depending on the nature of the specific group within the Rastafarian collectivity. The most highly articulated version of this theology rests with the Order of the Nyahbinghi (McPherson, 1982, 1983). The other groups, depending on the degree of religious orientation, embody varying forms of this theology and in different degrees of complexity. In a sense, the movement can be visualized as consisting of concentric rings revolving around a core. The core is the Order of the Nyahbinghi, whilst other groups, depending on the degree of their religious orientation, are located in these concentric rings. The outer rings also depict a tendency away from this 'sacred' core, and are closer to the outside 'profane' world. To a degree, this description is analogous to Berger's conceptualization of the church and sect in terms of their relative positions to the immediacy of the spirit. The sect, within Berger's framework corresponds to the sacred core, whilst the church is closer to the profane world (Hill, 1973).

Some features common to the Nyahbinghi Order are also found in the descriptions of the ideal typical sect. The Nyahbinghi Order centers around the charismatic figure of Ras Eoanarges, a

well known figure in the Rastafarian community, and also highly respected by the other elders of the community. Members of the Nyahbinghi Order are also the most serious and religious Rastafarians. Rituals, within this group, are highly specific and take the form of fasting days and prayers. Within the Nyahbinghi Order itself, variations do exist between those that are deeply committed to the faith and are accorded special status with respect to the rituals and rites, and those that form the outer periphery. Knowledge is primarily transmitted through oral tradition from core members to other members. The recruitment of core members occurs through covert means, whereby individual Rastafarians are critically observed with regards to their display of commitment to the Rastafarian faith.

As with all sectarians, the members of the Nyahbinghi Order perceive themselves to be the 'elect' of Jah. Furthermore, while the Rastafarian livity is practiced in varying degrees by other Rastafarians, members of the Nyahbinghi Order manifest a higher degree of commitment insofar as the basic precepts of the Rastafarian livity are concerned. In this sense, the Rastafarian faith permeates every aspect of an individual's life. With respect to the ritual events the Nyahbinghi Order, as with all other groups has ceremonial gatherings on specific nights such as the commemoration of Haile Selassie's visit to Jamaica and his birthday. These 'binghis' are a powerful source of cohesiveness, and serve to bring members together from different groups, and different areas of the island.

An interesting aspect of these 'binghis', as organized by the Nyahbinghi Order, is that very often other peripheral members are unaware of the significance of certain rituals which are being acted out. Hence, the inner order of the ritual is not apparent to everyone. Rather, only the committed members are aware of the significance and meaning attached to the rituals in question. For example, in a binghi ceremony, as conducted by the Nyahbinghi Order, only certain specified persons are allocated the task of looking after the 'fire key' which is placed at the centre of the circle. Peripheral members are ignorant of the sacred significance of this fire key, and also perceive it to be an ordinary event. In this respect, even the theological significance of the fire key is unknown by peripheral members and other Rastafarians (McPherson, 1983).

Recent developments in this Rastafarian group which is located in Jamaica, indicate an emerging tendency away from this attitude of 'religious elitism' in terms of the possession the esoteric theology of the Rastafarian faith. Active attempts are now being undertaken by key members of the Nyahbinghi Order to enlighten the Rastafarian community in the rural areas surrounding Kingston, e.g. the parish of Clarendon, and other areas of the Caribbean, e.g. Barbados (E.S.P. McPherson, 1983, and personal communication). This 'resurrection' of the Nyahbinghi Order is a result of various external and internal factors

affecting the future development of the Rastafarian movement. ⁷

Compared to the general membership of the movement, members of the Nyahbinghi Order are more serious in terms of their religious commitments. In part, the embodiment of the religious stream of Rastafarianism as expressed by the Nyahbinghi Order, stems from the religious orientation of Ras Boanarges who played an active role in the Rastafarian movement in the sixties, and who was a founding member of the House of the Youth Black Faith. The retreatist tendency of the Nyahbinghi Order in the last two decades can be attributed to the persecution suffered by Ras Boanarges. At present, the Nyahbinghi Order is resurfacing with an objective of mobilizing the movement around their interpretation of the Rastafarian tradition. However, the obstacles imposed by the government and the competing hostility from other groups are a sure impediment to the fulfillment of this goal. Nonetheless, Ras Boanarges's legitimacy within the movement, and the dissemination of the Rastafarian theology by members of this group in Jamaica and other parts of the Caribbean are contributing factors towards the achievement of this goal (McPherson, 1983).

The Nyahbinghi Order also contains a subgroup, called Church Triumphant. This group represents the more militant wing of the Nyahbinghi Order and is led by Ras Shedrach (Albuquerque, 1977). While hostilities between the Nyahbinghi, the Church Triumphant,

⁷ I shall discuss some of these factors in a later section devoted to my perceptions of the future of the Rastafarian movement.

and other groups is an ever present factor, the charismatic authority of the 'bon'- Ras Boanarges is recognized by all (McPherson, 1983) However, this situation of inter-group rivalry is not only apparent in the Jamaican context of Rastafarianism. Rather, rivalry between groups has also been noted in the English variant of the movement (Cashmore, 1979). However, most Rastafarians residing in other Caribbean islands are, to a large extent, ignorant of the various groups in Jamaica. *

The Rastafarian group that approximates the most closely to the ideal type of cult is the Twelve Tribes of Israel organization. Essentially, this group which is led by 'Brother Gad', is based on a belief system rooted in a particular interpretation of the bible. Thus, members are allocated to tribes depending on the month they were born in. Hence, an individual born in the month of July would be classified as belonging to the tribe of Judah. Membership within this group is voluntary, and commitment is loosely defined. Although there are dues collected from the membership, they amount to a small monetary contribution which is negligible when compared to the economic positions of the Rastafarians in this group. Basically, the membership is largely composed of Reggae musicians. Bob Marley, the Reggae King, was a member of this organization (White, 1983).

* From personal communications with several island brethren who attended the International Theocratic Congress held at the University of the West Indies, Mona, Kingston, Jamaica, in July, 1983.

The Twelve Tribes have their headquarters in Kingston. As such the organization of this group is structured along democratic lines with twelve women and twelve men acting as a guiding committee for the organization. The Twelve Tribe members meet periodically, usually twice a month. There is a Twelve Tribe dance held once a month, in which according to some sources,⁹ alcohol and other non-Ital foodstuffs are served. Within the Rastafarian movement, the Twelve Tribes organization is considered to be a 'false' representation of Rastafarianism. The Nyahbinghi Order look upon the Twelve Tribes with disdain. Most of the activities of the Twelve Tribes organization are secular in nature in the form of sports activities and dances. Part of the negative image of this group is facilitated by the nature of its membership, which is by and large, composed of musicians, who are generally considered to be 'wolves in sheep's clothing' by the elders of the movement. In addition, the reputation of Brother Gad is rather negative amongst the more serious Rastafarians, given his claim to divinity which he states quite explicitly¹⁰

The 'cultic' nature of the Twelve Tribes organization is manifested in a number of ways. Firstly, the membership requirements in such a group are minimal, and membership, in

⁹From personal communications with Rastafarians in Kingston, Jamaica, July, 1983.

¹⁰ Interviews with members of the Nyahbinghi Order forms the source of this information. Particularly, personal communication with E. S. P. McPherson, and Ras Joseph, a Jamaican Rastafarian also confirms this information.

totality, is vaguely defined. Anyone can go to a function organized by the Twelve Tribes group, whether he is a Rastafarian or not. Compared to the Nyahbinghi Order, where the precept of growing dreadlocks is widely adhered to, the Twelve Tribes group has no such strict code with respect to any aspect of the Rastafarian livity. Secondly, the functions of the Twelve Tribe members are largely secular in content, and whatever religious rituals are practiced are not accorded the intensity of religiosity as found amongst the Order of the Nyahbinghi. Even the bimonthly meetings are changed if they happen to coincide with a secular function such as a dance. It can be argued that the Twelve Tribes group is located on the outer rings of the concentric circles surrounding the Nyahbinghi core. Members of the Twelve Tribes group, may, if they are deeply committed to the Rastafarian faith, be drawn to the Nyahbinghi Order, and thus, may shift their group allegiance over a period of time.

While the Twelve Tribes suffer a negative image with other Jamaican groups, they remain a dominant Rastafarian organization in the United States (White, 1983). The evolution of the Twelve Tribes organization is also a relatively recent event in the Rastafarian movement. There is no clear time period indicated in the literature regarding the birth of this group within the movement, however, Cashmore (1977) implies that the appearance of Twelve Tribes in England occurred in the early seventies. Since the English variant of the movement is closely tied in

with Rastafarianism in Jamaica, one may assume that the Twelve Tribes emerged in the Jamaican context in the late sixties or early seventies. Again, the size of the membership, as with the movement as a whole, is not known.

It is clear from accounts from different groups and individual Rastafarians that the Twelve Tribes organization is a collective expression of Brother Gad's specific interpretation of the Rastafarian belief system. Furthermore, apart from Brother Gad, there do not seem to be other individuals in the group that exercise authority and direct the membership. It would seem logical, then, that, the Twelve Tribes organization would not survive for long if Brother Gad died. With the death of this charismatic leader, in all probability, a crisis over leadership would ensue. Any potential power struggles for the leadership may spell the demise of the group, or the beginning of another alternative organization. There is a possibility, however, that the Twelve Tribes organization may break off completely from the Rastafarian movement by creating their own belief system which suits their general orientation. This method was adopted by another group, which originally emerged from the substratum of the Rastafarian mystic collectivity.

The development of the Rastafarian Coptic group was essentially similar to the Twelve Tribes organization. The Coptics separated from the Rastafarian collectivity and established an independent religious organization, expounding a belief system similar to the Rastafarians but differing in some

aspects. The instrumental factor in the 'split' of the Coptics from the main body of the Rastafarian movement in Jamaica was the mutual hostility between them and the other Rastafarians, who they derogatively termed 'rope heads' referring to the long dreadlocks worn by the Rastafarians. In addition, the Coptics were engaged in large scale cultivation of marijuana which they also traded in the world black market. The Coptics were also, in terms of economic wealth, far better off than the average Rastafarian. In their case, the profits from trading ganja were the main contributor to individual wealth. However, as with the members of the Twelve Tribes organization, the Coptics did not channel any of this profit into the Rastafarian community in Jamaica, and thus were the subject of the same degree of disapproval as is experienced by the Twelve Tribes members from such groups as the Order of the Nyahbinghi (McPherson, 1983, and personal communication, July, 1983).

In a sense, the Twelve Tribes group approximates the ideal type of 'local cult' (Nelson, 1969). The Twelve Tribes organization revolves around the authority of Brother Gad, who introduced the notion of astrologically ruled tribes which is a structural feature quite alien to the rest of the Rastafarian movement, even though some importance is attached to the month of Judah which is also the month in which Haile Selassie was born. Furthermore, Brother Gad's interpretation of the Rastafarian belief system is not legitimated by other groups within the movement, and is therefore considered to be

'deviant'. It is possible, moreover, that with Brother Gad's death, the Twelve Tribes organization will dissolve due to the lack of charismatic leadership. Insofar as the issue of repatriation is concerned, the Twelve Tribes organization as opposed to the Nyahbinghi Order, is actively involved in aiding the migration of their members to Shashamani (the land allocated by the Emperor to the black people of the West for their support to the Ethiopian cause at the time of the Italian invasion). In this respect, the Twelve Tribes adopts a different attitude than the one integral to the to the Nyahbinghi Order which envisions the messianic return of HaileSelassie, and the subsequent repatriation of all blacks to Africa, as an impending reality.

Members of the Twelve Tribes also manifest a more syncretistic attitude with regard to their belief in Rastafarianism.¹¹ Within this organization, the variation regarding the Emperor's position in relation to God is apparent. By contrast, in the Nyahbinghi Order, the divinity of the Emperor as Jah himself is an undeniable fact for all members. While the true Nyahman ¹² is to be found in the rural parts of Jamaica - in the hills outside the urban areas, the members of the Twelve Tribes are concentrated in the urban centres. In

¹¹ A personal interview with a member of this organization revealed that the individual combined a mystical interpretation of other Eastern religions, e.g. Buddhism, with his personal interpretation of the Rastafarian faith. In the classic manner of Troeltsch's mystic, this individual Rastafarian perceived all esoteric religious paths as containing the same message.

¹²The Nyahman is regarded as a 'true' Rastafarian, and is more often than not, a core member of the Order of the Nyahbinghi.

general, the Twelve Tribes organization is considered to be a fringe group by the other Rastafarian groups (McPherson, personal communication, July, 1983). Based on the common characteristics of the membership, the Twelve Tribes organization could be considered to be a formalized expression of 'like minded people' who have an interest in the Rastafarian faith, and for whom the Rastafarian image is conducive to success in a worldly sense (i.e. the Rastafarian garb adopted by Reggae musicians for personal ends).

In terms of Wilson's (1969, 1970) seven fold typology of sectarianism, the Nyahbinghi Order comes closest in approximating the ideal type of the Revolutionist sect based on some of its features which correspond with aspects of the Nyahbinghi Order. Essentially, these features include a belief in the cataclysmic overthrow of the social order, a belief in the imminent nature of the millenium and the second coming of the messiah; and, above all, a response to the world which is predominantly hostile. In conjunction with the above, the Nyahbinghi also considers itself to be the only path to salvation, and holds a self conception of itself as the 'elect of Jah'.

The Rastafarian movement also contains another group, which, following Wilson's typology, approaches the ideal type of the Introversionist sect. The Introversionist sect, as defined by Wilson, exhibits the following characteristics: an indifference to the external world; a retreatist attitude; to

the world which is both psychological and physical; a focus on the 'deepening of religious experience; a strong sense of group solidarity, and a high value placed on communalism. These elements can be found, to a degree, in the Rastafarian community of the Bobo Shantis.

The Bobo Shantis are a communitarian group revolving around the charismatic leadership of Prince Emmanuel who also claims divine powers. The Bobo Shantis live in a commune on Zion Hill, which is located in a strategic area facing the sea, such that when the long awaited ships arrive to transport the blacks back to their 'heartland' - Africa, the Bobo Shantis will be the first to know. Prince Emmanuel's commune is tightly organized with rigid behavioural and role expectations. The Prince, himself, is treated like royalty, and has a central area where he holds court and receives visitors. Usually, in one of these royal audiences, the prince is attended by his 'courtiers' who stand on either side, fanning him, and generally catering to his every whim. Dietary laws are strictly followed and specific tasks allocated to members. For example, the food is cooked by a specific person. An elaborate code of etiquette is followed in the presence of the Prince. Visitors are also required to display the same honour and dignity towards the Prince, by partaking in this court etiquette. Prayer rituals are also in strict accordance with the Prince's interpretation of the faith. Social laws regarding women are also elaborate; a woman cannot enter the communal house of worship or appear before the Prince,

until fifteen days after her menstrual cycle has begun. Until this point, women are supposed to go into 'concealment' and not even be seen or heard except by other women who are appointed to look after them. The same social codes apply to women who have recently undergone childbirth.

In the Bobo Shanti commune, both men and women have to bind their head with cloth. Even when the members are outside the commune, they are instructed to wear this head dress. Deviance of any sort within the commune is punished by ostracism or expulsion. In most cases, members have been expelled for crimes such as questioning the authority of Prince Emmanuel or violating the social codes (McPherson, 1983, and personal communication, July 1983). However, the psychological bonding between the individual Bobos and the commune is of such a nature that even when they are expelled, the adherents refuse to leave the commune entirely and can be found in small communities in the immediate proximity of the commune.¹³ The Bobo generally keep to themselves and will rarely interact with outsiders.

Interviews with Prince Emmanuel are difficult to obtain unless the researcher comes well recommended. Aside from this, the Bobo Shanti commune is technologically abreast with regards to retaining information concerning the commune and the Rastafarian movement as a whole. Any interviews with outsiders

¹³ Personal observations in Jamaica have confirmed this fact. These communities of exiled persons, numbering some twenty to thirty adherents, are usually involved in the production of leather goods.

are also recorded by the Bobo for future use and reference. It is interesting to see the archaic structure of the commune with respect to the deference displayed towards Prince Emmanuel, and the use of technology by the Bobos. Furthermore, it is common knowledge amongst the Rastafarian intellectuals, that the Prince spends most of his time writing letters to heads of states all over the world regarding repatriation, recognition of the Rastafarian faith, and condemnation of political actions which directly or indirectly affect the Rastafarian community. ¹⁴

The Bobo commune exhibits the classic features of a sect in terms of the penetration of religious ethic into every aspect of the adherent's life; a process facilitated by the close communal living of the Bobo Shantis. Similarly, Prince Emmanuel's position within this group approximates the ideal sectarian locus of authority which is in the form of a personal charismatic leader, located within the sect. The Bobos are also not concerned with any form of overt evangelism or conversion. Rather, conversion is gradual, and is largely facilitated by the introduction of the novice to other members of the commune who then, over a period of time, gradually impart the teachings of the commune to these new converts.

The interpretation of Rastafarianism espoused by Prince Emmanuel corresponds to the core aspects of the movement's

¹⁴ A Libyan medical professional, visiting Jamaica, revealed that a letter sent by Prince Emmanuel concerning the Organization of African Unity's postponed meeting, was published in a local newspaper in Libya (personal communication, July 1983).

theology. This includes a belief in the divinity of Haile Selassie as the personification of God; and the belief in the reality and imminent nature of repatriation. The latter is viewed in the classical messianic sense whereby ships will be sent to Jamaica to carry the 'chosen ones' back to Zion (Africa). Although the Prince is well thought of by the other elders of the movement, his claim to divinity has incited some reaction. The interesting aspect of this interaction between the Bobo and other Rastafarian groups is that the latter simply deny the Prince's claim to divine power.¹⁵ To a large extent, the overall legitimacy of Prince Emmanuel is derived from his reputation in the Rastafarian community as being a serious proponent of Rastafarianism, and as incorporating the basic tenets of the Rastafarian livity in the commune. However, personal observations indicate that there are some groups that view the Bobos as being extremists in their practice of the Rastafarian faith. Aside from these main tenets of Rastafarianism, the Bobo interpretation and practice also contains the recitation of specific prayers which include Prince Emmanuel's name (this is apparent from the literature distributed by the commune to researchers and others who are interested in observing the commune). Unfortunately, demographic

¹⁵ The literature available from the Bobo commune clearly states that Prince Emmanuel is an 'incarnation of Haile Selassie". Yet, most of the Rastafarians I spoke with refused to acknowledge this until confronted with this literature, and even then, the reaction was one of nonchalance. (Personal communications with Rastafarians in Kingston, Jamaica, July, 1983).

information on the adherents of this group is lacking in the literature. In fact, there is scarcely any mention of this group in the literature on the Rastafarians.

Groups incorporating a political orientation include the Rastafarian Movement Association (Albuquerque, 1977), the Rasta Brethren Repatriation Association (Nettleford, 1972), and the Rastafarian locals of the Ethiopian World Federation (Yawney, 1979). There are other groups such as the Judah Coptics which seem to combine the political and religious orientations. In one sense, this political stream has its roots in the Rastafarian theology. The belief in a theocratic government ruled by a divine king has perpetuated the political element in the Rastafarian movement. Thus, it can be argued that this political element has been hived off from the belief system and become formally expressed through these distinctly politically oriented groups. Within the Rastafarian belief system, this stems from the 'split' between the 'churchical' and 'statecal'¹⁶ elements found in the concept of divine theocracy.

The political groups within the Rastafarian collectivity have certain elements in common. They are all bound by the common denominators of Rastafarianism discussed earlier. In this sense, the political symbols are concealed by the religious cloak of Rastafarianism. This is not to say that members of these political groups masquerade as Rastafarians, rather, that

¹⁶These are Rastafarian terms: the religious (churchical) and the state or governmental machinery (statecal).

the political goals and aspirations of this group are accorded a higher priority than the practice of the Rastafarian faith alone. The Rastafarian tradition allows this group to vocalize its dissatisfaction with the existing state of affairs, and furthermore provides them with a suitable conception of their 'ideal' society. Thus, the conception of redemption through repatriation is a goal which is striven for in a material sense by this group.

The political groups within the movement are highly populated by academics, and these individuals form the vanguard of the particular groups they belong to. For example, Mortimo Planno, one of the leading members of a political group, and under whose direction the Rasta Voice, a Rastafarian newspaper, is published, is considered to be one of the most learned Rastafarians in the movement (Albuquerque, 1977). Leading these politically inclined groups are a number of charismatic persons who are avid supporters of specific political ideologies. The personality profiles of these individuals has been documented by Albuquerque (1977) who reveals that most of these individuals have been politically active in other political parties and movements at some time in their past. For example, Ras De Silva, an influential personality who also chaired a large part of the recent International Congress of the Rastafarians in Jamaica (July, 1983), was also an active member of the Communist party in one of the Caribbean islands (Albuquerque, 1977). Yet, there is a conflict of interests here given that the the movement as a

whole does not advocate any level of participation in the political arena. In fact, at the recent conference held in Kingston, Jamaica, the banner above the main podium portrayed in large letters, a strongly worded message stating that 'Rastas don't want no politics'.¹⁷

The major difference between these political groups and the religious groups is that the former espouse a more realistic view of repatriation. In one sense, it could be argued that these political groups have perpetuated Garvey's philosophy of African repatriation. Garvey had hoped to accomplish this process of repatriation through his ship line called the 'Black Star liner' (Barrett, 1977, Cashmore, 1979). The physical means by which repatriation was to be achieved has been emulated by the political groups; except that their method consists of exerting pressure on the government of Jamaica and the United Nations. Furthermore, these political groups demand 'repatriation with compensation' based on their forced migration and coerced labour. Thus, they demand that the governments and other international bodies, such as the United Nations, pay for their transportation and settlement costs in Africa.

The political groups, although engaging in the standard rituals and prayers of the Rastafarian faith, lack the elaborate and highly articulated aspects of theology possessed by the Nyahbinghi Order. Furthermore, the reasonings engaged in by

¹⁷ Personal observations at the conference in Kingston, Jamaica, July 1983.

members of these groups is highly political in content (Albuquerque, 1977). During the sixties, the government's policies of cooptation through rehabilitative programmes were most successful amongst the politically inclined groups. This is due to their underlying philosophy which is to improve the socio-economic condition of blacks in Jamaican society. The Nyahbinghi Order, by contrast, rejected these measures of rehabilitation, stating that repatriation was all it desired¹⁸ (Albuquerque, 1977, McPherson, 1983).

The Rastafarians that compose the membership of these politically inclined groups are mostly those that espouse a political leaning towards a particular ideology, or are attracted to the political rhetoric of the movement, i.e. its anti-establishment orientation, its view of the blacks as an oppressed class, etc. The latter group are university students and have been identified by Nettleford (1973) as 'functional' Rastafarians, since they use their affiliation to the movement for personal ends.

The presence of these politically inclined groups within the movement has led some researchers to apply Worsley's (1967) interpretation of millennial movements as pre-political phenomena paving the way for the development of mature political party formation. The fact that Jamaica has had a two party political system since its independence counters a direct

¹⁸Personal interview with Ras Boanarges also confirms this finding (Kingston, Jamaica, July, 1983).

application of Worsley's theory. Albuquerque (1977) claims that the two party system currently in effect in Jamaica, represents the elite and middle classes of that society. Hence, any adequate representation of the blacks, who form the majority of the total population who are at the bottom of the social ladder, is lacking. The groups embodying political elements in the Rastafarian tradition allow for some sort of representation for these blacks. This explains, to some degree, the continuing survival of these politically inclined groups within the Rastafarian collectivity.

Since the sixties, the Rastafarian movement has been subjected to various policies of cooptation and containment by the government. Some of these policies were a direct result of the recommendations set forth by the 1960 University report. One of these recommendations requested that the government invite a branch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to Jamaica. This would then allow for some sort of 'legitimate' religious affiliation for the Rastafarians (Smith et al, 1960). Consequently, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church set up a branch in Jamaica in the mid sixties.¹⁹ In the early period of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church's presence in Jamaica, many Rastafarians became

¹⁹ The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is the state religious body of Ethiopia. While its religious theology differs from the Roman Catholic Church, especially with regard to the emphasis placed on the religious and historical significance attached to the meeting between Solomon and Sheba and the transfer of the Ark of the Covenant to Ethiopia. The priests of the various branches of the church are chosen and allocated their position by the elite of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Ethiopia (Cashmore, 1977).

affiliated to it, even though the church refused to allow the wearing of dreadlocks, and set out the requirement that only those members who were willing to crop their locks would be baptised and admitted into the church. Nonetheless, membership swelled with Rastafarians who considered the church as representing, in an institutionalized and legitimate form, the belief in the divinity of Haile Selassie, even though this was openly denied by the church leaders (Barrett, 1977, Cashmore, 1979). The more religious oriented groups within the movement refused to participate in the services of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church on the grounds that one did not need an external church to worship Jah, and that the spirit of Jah was always presiding with them (Albuquerque, 1979, McPherson, 1983).

However, over the last few years, particularly since the death of Haile Selassie, the Rastafarian membership in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has declined slightly. Part of this decline can be attributed to the removal of Haile Selassie's name from the Church's liturgy as a function of the change in governments in Ethiopia. The recent government does not recognize the Solomonic line of descent, enjoyed by the former Emperor, as connotating any special status, and, moreover, Haile Selassie is viewed negatively and as having subjected the Ethiopian people to a despotic regime.

While the Ethiopian Orthodox Church considers itself to be a 'church', in sociological terms its organization approximates most closely to that of a denomination. Part of the tendency

towards being a denomination can be attributed to the fact that the organization is one of the many religious groups in the Jamaican context, and is a branch of another larger organization which has a more church-like status in its indigenous country, Ethiopia. Secondly, it is clear that amongst the Rastafarians members of the church, the sacraments distributed by the church are given a more subjective and individualistic meaning. In fact, even though the official stance of the church is to deny the divinity of Haile Selassie, the Rastafarian members still espouse these beliefs much to the dismay of church officials who are aware of this discrepancy (Cashmore, 1977).

Amongst the Rastafarian members who attend the services of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the regularity of church attendance is very high (Cashmore, 1977, and personal observations of a Rastafarian group in Montego Bay, Jamaica, July, 1983). Furthermore, the devotion of these members with respect to prayers and rituals such as baptism resembles the high degree of commitment expressed by members of a sect. The expression of different orientations within one religious organization has also been recorded in empirical studies within the sociology of religion. Demerath, for example, found that church members varied in their orientations in terms of religious commitment to the church. According to his findings, members from the lower socio-economic stratum were more likely to express sectarian attitudes towards the church, whereas members from the upper bracket of the socioeconomic ladder were

more likely to express a church like attitude and commitment (Robertson, 1969). This finding can be applied to some degree to the membership of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

The ideal typical church which is universal, conservative and accomodating to the social order does not exist in the mystic collectivity of the Rastafarians. However, the denomination type of organization is manifest through the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, which even though imported from the outside, caters to some of the needs of its Rastafarian membership. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church provides, for the Rastafarian members, a form of institutionalized organization with set services and a body of beliefs and practices which fit the normative religious institutions in Jamaica. One can speculate that the Rastafarian membership drawn to this 'church', reflect certain characteristics not apparent in the members of other religious subgroups within the collectivity such as the Order of the Nyahbinghi. One of these differentiating factors may be the need for a structured and more normative type of religious affiliation and expression which is not as far removed from the religious mainstream as the order of the Nyahbinghi.

Thus, it can be seen from this discussion that several types of religious organizations exist within the mystic collectivity of the Rastafarians. It is also apparent that these types of organization serve as collective expressions of a range of varying interpretations of the central belief system. These

interpretations attract particular individuals who find a corresponding affinity between their individual interpretations and the interpretations expounded by the particular groups. Thus, these varying organizational forms cater to the different needs of the memberships and correspond to individual interpretations of Rastafarianism. It is clear that these groups are distinguishable on the basis of their orientations which may be either political, religious, or cultural. Within the literature on the Rastafarians, an attempt has been made to delineate a typology of the membership and thus define the different types of Rastafarians that join the different groups. Three types of Rastafarians seem to exist within the movement; the religious, the political; and the functional (Albuquerque, 1977, Nettleford, 1972). In addition, another category of Rastafarians can be ascribed to the membership. These are the 'pseudo-Rastafarians' - a group which resembles the functional Rastas, discussed by Nettleford, but which utilize the movement for personal needs which are rooted in the individual's psychology and in their position in society.

These different types of Rastafarians are affiliated to different organizations of Rastafarianism which represent a particular orientation and interpretation of the central belief system. The participation of members in groups which collectively represent an orientation compatible with their own serves to perpetuate the existence of these varying groups within the umbrella of Rastafarianism. Thus, an

interrelationship exists between the different groups and the membership they cater to. While the total number of Rastafarians affiliated to these groups is unknown, the popularity of binghi ceremonies and events demonstrates a high level of lay participation. It may be safe to assume that while most Rastafarians disdain any form of organized census or a binding affiliation in a legalistic form with any organization, the majority do manifest a type of subjective identification with at least one group in the mystic collectivity. Furthermore, this identification may range in expression - from an overt commitment to a group to a casual appearance at a major function.

In conclusion, it can be seen that the mystic collectivity of the Rastafarians has precipitated varying organizational forms. Some of these forms can only be found in the indigenous setting of Rastafarianism, i.e. Jamaica. Others, however, exist in other parts of the world where the movement is spreading. In the following chapter dealing with the spread of the movement, the different forms of Rastafarianism and the presence of the various types of Rastafarians will be discussed.

V. The Growth of the Rastafarian Movement and the Forms of Jah

The rapid growth and spread of the Rastafarian movement in the last fifty years raises a number of questions, from a sociological perspective, regarding the factors responsible for such a dramatic and unforeseen growth. The international character of the membership is evidence of the capability of the movement's belief system to transcend cultural, racial, and national boundaries. This chapter offers one possible explanation of the factors contributing to this rapid growth in membership, and the geographic spread of the movement. The reasons for this growth, as suggested here, are rooted in the intradynamics of the movement, its appeal, and the interrelationship between the environment and the Rastafarians themselves. In this respect, the structure of the Rastafarian movement as a mystic collectivity forms the departure point for the line of inquiry pursued.

Two main features which approximate the Rastafarian movement to a mystic collectivity were elaborated on in the preceding discussion. These were the common denominators shared by members of the movement and the existence of various groups in the movement. It was also noted that aside from the multiplicity of organizational types within the collectivity, the Rastafarian membership could also be differentiated on the basis of their motives for adherence to the movement. Hence, the

mystic collectivity of the Rastafarians is populated by individuals who can be categorized as either political, religious, functional or pseudo -Rastafarians.

The political Rastafarians, although professing a belief in the eschatological aspirations of the theology, translate these into secular processes, i.e. their desire to be repatriated manifests itself in political activities such as lobbying the government and the United Nations to recognize their status as alien residents in Jamaica, and to provide the necessary aid and funding to facilitate their migration to Ethiopia. The religious Rastafarians in contrast, espouse a strictly messianic interpretation and look towards repatriation as being instigated by Haile Selassie and carried out en masse. The difference between the functional and pseudo-Rastafarians lies in their specific use of the Rastafarian belief system.

While the functional Rastafarians are drawn from the intelligentsia, and interpret and utilize Rastafarianism in a political sense in terms of seeking social and political reform in society, the pseudo-Rastafarians can be found in the fringes of the movement, and utilize Rastafarianism for apparently purely personal ends. The latter lack the political orientation of the former and are centred on the fashionable appeal of the movement stemming from its distinctiveness and its 'deviant' status in relation to mainstream society. Moreover, individuals in this group may use Rastafarianism as a means to legitimate their intake of marijuana or as a means of being a member of an

'elite, private and somewhat exclusive club'¹ In a sense, the pseudo-Rastafarians resemble the fringe members who can be found at the peripheries of most social and religious movements which deviate from the mainstream and which embody some form of social protest, e.g the Punk Rockers. The pseudo-Rastafarians embrace the Rastafarian creed as they would any 'bandwagon' setting the latest trend in fashion and style.

It is clear from the preceding analysis of groups precipitated by the Rastafarian mystic collectivity that individuals are drawn to groups which exhibit an orientation corresponding to their own. Weber has termed this as the process of 'elective affinities' whereby individuals will choose aspects of a religious belief system which correspond to their pre-existing view of the world. Hence, it can be argued that the formation of distinct subgroups precipitated by the mystic collectivity is a consequence of this process of elective affinities on the part of charismatic personalities. In a wider sense, elective affinities also occur amongst the membership who affiliate with those subgroups that manifest an orientation similar to their own.

Integral to the the appeal of the Rastafarian movement is the freedom accorded to the members, who are allowed to choose

¹ This is apparent from personal communication and observations with members of the Rastafarian community both in Vancouver, Canada and Kingston, Jamaica, who had no conception of the intricate nature of the belief system and some of whom even denied the divine status attributed to Haile Selassie. Yet, these members conformed to Rastafarian precepts such as wearing dreadlocks, and following the Ital diet.

and exercise their own interpretation of the Rastafarian faith, and to adhere to those groups that reflect an interpretation which corresponds to their own. Thus, the functional Rastafarians, who are largely drawn from the middle classes, and are usually university students, are attracted to the movement on the basis of its potential as a political weapon by which to lever reform in society. The more political Rastafarians are drawn to the movement on the grounds of its inherently revolutionary message which they perceive as being translatable into praxis by an actual revolution mobilized from the grass roots by the Rastafarian ideology of power reversal and black supremacy (Campbell, 1980a).²

The religious Rastafarians, on the other hand, seem to be drawn to the movement as a function of several interrelated variables. In the first instance, most of the early adherents to the movement fall in this category. From the review of the literature on the Rastafarians, it can be deduced that initially members were drawn to the movement by its messianic vision and promises. In this respect, Rastafarianism offered one, albeit 'fantastic', avenue out of the ghetto and the concomitant depressing socio-economic conditions. Thus, membership granted these individuals a sense of status and dignity which was denied

² Claudius Henry's attempted coup d'etat is an example of this political use of Rastafarianism (Barrett, 1968). According to one Rastafarian from Grenada, Maurice Bishop's successful coup d'etat was a result of the support from the Rastafarian brethren in Grenada in combination with military aid from Cuba (Pas I-Star, Jamaica, July 1983).

to them by that society. Rastafarianism also conferred on the lives of these individuals a sense of purpose and meaning. But, unlike other religious groups prevalent in the Jamaican cultural milieu during this period, Rastafarianism embodied a futuristic yet imminent sense of salvation. In other words, the Rastafarian faith offered a type of salvation which was tangible in terms of its this-worldly nature and which was also imminent. Furthermore, unlike those religious groups which appointed a mediator between God and man, the Rastafarian belief system had no such mediating person. The relationship between Jah and man was direct and personal. This seems to have been a crucial factor in the initial appeal of the movement.

This emphasis on a direct relationship between Jah and man prevails in the movement today, and is a significant factor in determining the direction of the movement away from total institutionalization or its evolution towards a wholly sectarian form of organization. Furthermore, it is this lack of a personal mediator that has led to the approximation of the Rastafarian movement to a mystic collectivity. It can be argued that, to an extent, Haile Selassie is the acknowledged leader of the movement, and, as the personification of Jah, is a mediator between man and God. In other words, by taking on a human form, God becomes the mediator between Himself and man. The only point of contention here is that Haile Selassie never publicly affirmed that he was the personification of God, and thus never acknowledged the role attributed to him by the Rastafarians.

Moreover, even if the individual Rastafarian perceived the emperor to be a mediator, the latter was never physically available or in close geographic proximity to the adherent. Even so, the relationship between the adherent and Haile Selassie is more of an abstract and psychological nature than the relationship between a member of the Roman Catholic Church and the presiding priest to whom he/she may periodically confess.

An important determinant in contributing to the growth of the movement and in influencing the variant of Rastafarianism that emerges, is the socio-economic and cultural environment. It is interesting to note that the variants of Rastafarianism or what I propose to term the 'form of Jah', meaning the particular form and interpretation of Rastafarianism that have emerged in other parts of the Caribbean, in England, Canada, and the United States are remarkably different from the forms of Jah extant in Jamaica. The differences between these various forms of Jah are, to some measure, rooted in the differences between the various social environments.

The following discussion begins with an analysis of the internal factors in the Rastafarian mystic collectivity that have contributed to the rapid growth and spread of the Rastafarian tradition. Thereafter, a discussion of the the impact of external variables such as the socio-economic and cultural factors in society on the spread and growth of the Rastafarian movement follows. An examination of the different forms of Jah in such various social contexts as Canada and

England is undertaken in an attempt to shed light on the factors responsible for the variation in forms, and the differences within the Rastafarian membership in these varying social contexts.

There are several structural features of religiously inspired and other social movements which contribute to their survival and growth. Gerlach and Hines (1968) have noted five variables that are significant in perpetuating the survival and growth of religious movements. The five factors they delineated in their study of the Pentacostal movement are:

- (1) an acephalous, reticulate organizational structure,
- (2) face-to-face recruitment along lines of pre-existing significant social relationships, (3) commitment generated through an act or experience, (4) change-oriented ideology, and (5) real or perceived opposition (Gerlach and Hines, 1968:23).

They also state,

...these five factors are common in other types of movements and that when they are present and interacting, the conditions which were causal in the genesis of the movement become facilitating only and are not essential to its spread (1968:23).

It must be noted that these factors are not the only variables affecting the growth of religious movements. Moreover, there are other movements which do not exhibit these features but which have also expanded dramatically at certain points in their development.

To a degree, all these five factors can be found operating in the mystic collectivity of the Rastafarians. The 'acephalous' and 'reticulate' organization of the movement is apparent in the lack of a clear, defined and proximate leader who actively seeks

to introduce uniformity in the movement. To some extent, the role of leadership, has been attributed to Haile Selassie. However, the absence of the Emperor in a physical and immediate sense, especially since his death in 1975, does not approach the type of leadership which is active and immediate and which can be found in most sectarian religious groups. Thus, the movement is 'acephalous' - without a head. In part, it is this absence of a de facto type of leadership that has contributed to the presence of multiple groups in the collectivity which are either led by elders or other recognized charismatic individuals.

The second feature outlined by Gerlach and Hines (1968) deals with the 'reticulate' nature of these religious movements. The Rastafarian mystic collectivity, as shown in the preceding discussion of the many mansion of Rastafari, has a reticulate structure in terms of the network of groups extant and precipitated by the collectivity. Reticulate, essentially, indicates the presence of interconnecting cellular groups.

Another intrinsic feature of Rastafarianism which contributes to its growth is the particular process of conversion. There are no defined rites or procedures by which members are officially converted into the fold of Rastafarianism. Rather, the process of conversion is entirely centred on the individuals's subjective recognition of the divinity of Haile Selassie. Thus, conversion is an internal and highly subjective phenomenon. Kitzinger (1966, 1969) and Owens (1976) have termed this as an inborn conversion to

Rastafarianism.

That this process is not legitimated by an external form of authority allows individuals to utilize the religious tradition of Rastafarianism for a variety of reasons. This inborn conversion also allows for varying degrees of commitment in the movement, since the commitment expressed would logically reflect the intensity of the conversion experience. What is not specified in the literature is the nature of the conversion experience, whether it is an intellectual recognition of Haile Selassie as the personification of God, or a highly emotional and experiential state. The literature on the movement indicates that charismatic leaders who have formed groups within the movement have undergone a highly emotive state of conversion in the form of dreams and visions (Smith, et al, 1960, Barrett, 1968). These individuals are also ones who perpetuate the religious interpretation of Rastafarianism. One could speculate on this basis that the members who belong to the more secular and politically oriented Rastafarian groups are more likely to have undergone conversion experiences which are intellectual in nature.

It is apparent from various accounts of individual Rastafarians, (e.g. Albuquerque, 1977, Cashmore, 1979, Owens, 1976, and Yawney, 1979) that their certitude and conviction in Haile Selassie is very often a result of intense face-to-face

interactions with other Rastafarians.³ These face-to-face interactions over a period of time often culminate in the individual's conversion to the faith. This has been noted by Gerlach and Hine (1968) as being another factor promoting the growth of religious movements. Gerlach and Hines emphasize the basis of these interactions as being 'pre-existing significant social' relationships.

Within the Rastafarian collectivity, interactions between brethren and sympathizers are primary and personal in nature. Lefever (1977) has noted that members of the lower classes rarely engage in interactions which are secondary and tertiary. Rather, the majority of interactions that occur are primary in nature. Considering the origins of Rastafarianism from the ghettos of Jamaica, the emphasis on face-to-face interactions can be understood in this context. Though the movement has expanded on a world-wide scale, this type of face-to-face interaction still persists amongst Rastafarians and sympathizers of the movement who have had no 'pre-existing social relationships'. The nature of the interaction is also highly personal and is concentrated on matters of the faith. Generally, Rastafarians are quite open to discussion with anyone

³ Personal interview with a Rastafarian from England, (Ras S), revealed that for this individual, conversion to the Rastafarian faith began after his periodic and intense face-to-face interactions with them. According to this informant, he noticed that the Rastafarians led a very 'positive' and fulfilling life, and this is what primarily drew him to the movement (July, 1982).

interested in aspects of their faith.*

More than any other factor, it is the conviction in their faith that motivates the Rastafarians to engage in open and frank interactions with other Rastafarians and outsiders. To some extent, the lower class origin of the movement has carried over to the present day as evinced in the nature of these interactions. Yet, the particular nature of the interaction and the style it is carried forth in also strengthens the belief in the Rastafarian faith. The individual's faith is thus reinforced by the nature and style of these interactions. In terms of the growth of the movement, the intensity and genuine character of these face-to-face interactions is transmitted to others, thus attracting potential members into the fold of the collectivity.

The face-to-face type of interaction also serves as a primary vehicle for the dissemination of information regarding the Rastafarian theology. Within the various forms of Rastafarianism in Jamaica and elsewhere, the system of communication between individuals and groups conforms to what Gerlach and Hines have termed the 'grapevine network'. In the Rastafarian collectivity the 'grapevine network' is most apparent in communities that are in close geographic proximity. Hence, in Jamaica, the news of the internal events of one group become widely circulated around the island in a matter of hours. This is one means by which the 'binghi' ceremonies are

* As one Rastafarian I interviewed stated, "I can talk to anyone about Jah, no matter what time of day or night it is." (personal interview, June, 1982).

publicized. Even within the Rastafarian community in Vancouver, Canada, news regarding a Rastafarian event is widely circulated through the 'grapevine' regardless of whether or not the media have advertized the event.⁵ This type of internal communication system is a function of the close interactions between individual Rastafarians and sympathizers of the movement.

Other factors cited by Gerlach and Hines as contributing to the growth of religious movements are the actual or subjectively perceived hostility directed against the movement, and the nature of the ideology - which they argue should be dramatic and 'change-oriented'. Both these factors are present within the Rastafarian movement, although the actual hostility directed at the group varies as a function of its manifestation in different societal contexts. The nature of the Rastafarian belief system is undoubtedly oriented towards change; the latter being perceived in a dramatic fashion by religious members of the movement. Thus, the messianic nature of the belief system combined with the future goal of redemption through repatriation, and the emphasis on black supremacy contribute to the orientation towards change and the dramatic nature of the Rastafarian faith. This element of radical and imminent change is common to all interpretations of the Rastafarian belief system and thus can be found in all its varying organizational manifestations.

⁵ This is apparent from personal observations of the community in Vancouver, Canada, (July, 1982-1983).

With regard to the factor of perceived and actual hostility towards the movement, it can be argued that, while the degree of this hostility is contingent on the different social contexts of Rastafarianism, the sense of perceived hostility is common to virtually all forms of the movement. This perceived sense of hostility can be best described in terms of the 'Babylonian conspiracy' which is utilized by the Rastafarians in their analysis of contemporary local and world socio-political events. In other words, the dichotomy of 'good' which equals 'Zion' and Haile Selassie versus the external world which is equated with 'Babylon and Lucifer' permeates all Rastafarian thought and interaction. Furthermore, an integral element of the belief system is the struggle between the Rastafarians as the true 'Israelites' and the world at large, i.e. 'Babylon'. The 'Israelite' status connotes the Rastafarians as the chosen people of God, who because of their belief will be subjected to persecution by the wider society. So it can be argued that the perception of external hostility is built into the Rastafarian belief system regardless of the actual persecution directed at the movement.

Gerlach and Hines final criterion of factors determining the growth of religious movements is that members have to undergo an act or an experience in order to generate commitment towards the religious movement. Within the Rastafarian tradition, this varies and depends on individual perceptions and orientation towards the faith. In this sense, the commitment

generated also varies depending on the intensity and experience of the act or vision. Yet, the visible symbols of identification such as the wearing of dreadlocks displays this commitment to the edicts of the Rastafarian livity. It can be argued that while the degree of commitment generated through varying degrees of actions and experiences is not homogeneous in the collectivity, the very freedom of the range of commitments that can be expressed by the individual is an integral part of its overall appeal.

There are other factors which have contributed to the growth and spread of the Rastafarian mystic collectivity and which are rooted in the appeal of the movement to its members and other potential converts. The most appealing aspect of the Rastafarian belief system is that provides a source of identity, racial pride, and dignity, and above all a sense of status. Historically, the blacks have suffered many forms of oppression which range from outright exploitation in economic terms to a degradation of dignity via the slave trade and other more contemporary mechanisms of racial segregation and discrimination. The striving for identity has manifested itself through a variety of social and religious movements such as the Civil Rights movement, the Black Consciousness or Black Power movements, the Back to Africa movement of Marcus Garvey, and the Nation of Islam movement of the Black Muslims. Within the Carikbean context, the quest for identity has also taken a variety of forms ranging from the quasi-African religious groups

such as Obeah and Ethiopianism to the Universal Negroe Improvement Association of Marcus Garvey. To the oppressed blacks of the Caribbean and elsewhere, Rastafarianism provides one viable means of reclaiming a sense of dignity, racial pride, and above all an identity as an African and as one of the elect of God.

However, the racial composition of the Rastafarian membership is not wholly restricted to blacks. There are a number of white and E.Indian Rastafarians in England, Canada, and Jamaica.⁶ While the numbers of this non-black segment of the total membership is unknown, it may be safe to assume that it is a small percentage.⁷ It is also apparent that there are more white Rastafarians than E. Indian ones. Secondly, there seem to be, in the Vancouver Rastafarian community, more white females in the movement than males. On the whole, the Rastafarian community in Vancouver is male dominated. Most of the females enter the movement as a result of being married to a Rastafarian or are drawn to the movement as a result of a past association which has resulted in children.

There are a number of possible reasons for this difference in the membership in terms of the higher proportion of white females to males. The higher white female participation in the

⁶ Personal observations and interviews with Rastafarians residing in Vancouver, Canada are the source of this finding.

⁷ Within the Rastafarian community here in Vancouver, Canada, there is, at present, one Rastafarian who has an E. Indian racial background. In Jamaica, several Indian Rastafarians were pointed out to me (July, 1983).

Rastafarian tradition could be attributed to the appeal of the Rastafarian belief system to these women. On the other hand, it is more than likely that women enter the movement as a result of their pre-formed relationship with a Rastafarian male. Hence, the full expression of this relationship would naturally lead to the sharing of one's life with one's mate, and if the latter happened to be a Rastafarian, then a sharing of his belief system. In this regard, the literature and personal observations support this view in light of the male dominance of the movement and his role as head of household on the domestic level. Moreover, the Rastafarian male is quite adamant regarding strictures of the livity which apply to women.⁸

Yet, within the Jamaican variant of the movement, it has been noted in the literature that women are drawn to the movement on the basis of the structured nature of the Rastafarian livity and the clearly prescribed role of women. However, the Jamaican sociocultural milieu differs radically from that of West Coast Canadian society. Within Jamaican society, the incidence of illegitimate children is very high and women are usually forced into the role of head of household. The Rastafarian livity which clearly emphasizes the male dominance

⁸ This is true of the majority of males in the movement regardless of their general orientation and interpretation of the Rastafarian doctrine. In the area of social relations with women, Rastafarians exercise a differential interpretation of the belief system. This finding is largely based on personal observations and interactions with the male members of the movement both in Jamaica and in Vancouver, Canada. (1981, 1982, July, 1983).

in the domestic arena of social life is particularly appealing to women in this social context (Rowe, 1980). It can be seen that the needs of the membership differ with respect to the particular society they reside in. Finally, there are aspects of the Rastafarian treatment of women that are positive and appealing in themselves. In the first instance, a Rastafarian addresses his female consort as his 'Queen' and accords her a great deal of respect. Secondly, the role of children is of paramount importance in the Rastafarian tradition. Hence, the individual Rastafarian males are generally more concerned about and attentive to their offspring than their non-Rastafarian male counterparts (Barrett, 1968, 1977, Rowe, 1980, and personal observations).

Aside from this, there are other factors of Rastafarianism which enhance its attractiveness to potential members. In addition to providing an important source of identity, the Rastafarian tradition can also be utilized as a means for expressing social protest and criticism of the existing social order. In this respect, Rastafarianism provides the basis of a critique of the wider society, though in a language which is biblically tinged. As a belief system, Rastafarianism neatly assigns the responsibility for the negative conditions and events to Babylon, which to a large measure symbolizes the Western powers, and attributes the positive, and ameliorative actions to Jah. Such a belief system then provides meaning to some individuals who may already have a pre-existing negative

conception of the existing social order and world powers. Thus, the Rastafarian theology provides an explanation of the causal processes that have resulted in the contemporary world situation. Moreover, the belief system offers a path to salvation which is tangible and this worldly.

For many members of the Rastafarian faith, the latter has an added appeal in the sense of belonging and security it provides. This is linked with the function of Rastafarianism as a source of identity. However, the sense of belonging that membership in the movement confers on individuals differs from its function as a source of racial pride and dignity. It is interesting to note, from observations and interviews with a portion of the Rastafarians in Vancouver, Canada, that a number of the male non-black members had personal histories which revealed previous membership in other political, social, and religious movements⁹ It can be deduced from these observations that some of these non-black members were already marginal in relation to the communities they came from. ¹⁰

⁹ One informant revealed that he had been actively involved in the political and anti-establishment oriented groups in the late sixties. Another, had participated actively in the counter-culture movement when it spread to Canada. Yet another non-black informant revealed that he combined the precepts of the Yogic tradition with a belief in the Rastafarian faith, and that he was a trained teacher in Yoga, practicing the art in his everyday livity (personal interviews with non-black Rastafarians in Vancouver, Canada, 1982-1983).

¹⁰ This is particularly apparent in the case of one Rastafarian that I interviewed who openly stated that prior to his conversion to the Rastafarian faith, he felt alienated from his peers and also felt that he could not fit in the society in which he had spent most of his life. He stated, however, that being a Rastafarian had given him a sense of belonging which he

It has been pointed out that some of these non-black members had, in some time in their past, been affiliated to other religious groups before drifting into the Rastafarian mystic collectivity. In this sense, these adherents resemble the 'seekers' which populate the cultic milieu of society (Campbell, 1972, 1977). These 'seekers' attempt to maintain a fringe commitment to the cults populating the cultic milieu. However, when they do find a religious group that satisfies their needs and corresponds to their inner belief systems, which are usually syncretistic and have evolved over a period of time, then they will become highly committed to this religious group which Campbell describes as a 'revelatory cult'. This serves to describe a small portion of the total Rastafarian membership.

An apparent factor in the appeal of Rastafarianism is that it is a relatively recent phenomenon. Hence, its novelty still exists. This is particularly true of the public image of the movement in areas other than the Caribbean, e.g. United States. Moreover, it does not appear as an intense, religious type of fanaticism. Rather, it is quite clear from general reactions of the public that the movement, in terms of its religious authenticity, is not considered to be serious. This attitude which denies the movement any type of religious authenticity is also apparent in academic circles where the Rastafarians are viewed as one additional strange and deviant popular movement,

¹⁰ (cont'd) had not experienced prior to his conversion (July, 1982, Vancouver, Canada).

much in the way the establishment viewed the counter-culture. In one sense, while this is a negative perception of the movement it does lead to unforeseen consequences in terms of attracting members who adhere to the movement purely on the grounds of its deviant and aberrant status in relation to mainstream society.

However, not all members adhere to the movement on these grounds. Some members utilize the belief system to create a sense of subjective meaning and purpose in their lives. Other members by contrast interpret the Rastafarian belief system to suit particular interests. The latter includes the use of the Rastafarian tradition for the sole purpose of being different from one's peers or as a means to legitimize the intake of marijuana is a definite distortion of the belief system. Yet, the 'malleability' of the Rastafarian theology is in itself a definite factor contributing to the growth of the movement, and in this sense is part of the total appeal of the movement.

Members utilize the Rastafarian tradition for a variety of reasons, one of them being its use as a means by which to legitimize behaviour which the rest of society considers to be deviant, e.g. the consumption of marijuana.¹¹ For others, the central tenets of the Rastafarian livity conform to their personal beliefs such as the strict emphasis on a vegetarian

¹¹ Aside from the identification with Reggae music, the use of the belief system for this reason, i.e. as a means legitimizing the intake of marijuana also seems to be a factor amongst some Rastafarian members that I interviewed in the Canadian context. I would assume that amongst the Rastafarians in England and the United States, similar motives would emerge.

diet, a belief in the curative effects of ganja, a personal prejudice against the use of any artificial method of birth control, and a personal emphasis on the natural as opposed to the use of synthetic elements in food, clothing etc. However, it is apparent that other factors have to be present and interacting with these personal beliefs in order for the individual to fully commit him/herself to the Rastafarian faith. Yet, the utilization of Rastafarianism in a variety of ways, by the membership, stems from the loose structure of the Rastafarian mystic collectivity and the loosely articulated theology of Rastafarianism.

It seems that the various uses of the Rastafarian tradition stem from the specific needs of the membership. The latter, it may be argued, result from the interaction between the external social reality and internal, subjective experiences and perceptions. The growth and survival of religious movements is intimately related to external factors impinging on the movement. These external factors may range from socio-economic variables such as a sudden period of economic boom, or a drastic economic depression, to climatic disasters such as an intense earthquake or famine (Barkun, 1974), to society's response to a particular religious group (Gerlach and Hine, 1968), and also to the specific socio-cultural make up of the society which may include the absence of a mainstream religious institution or a decline in the power of the traditional religious institutions (Stark and Bainbridge, 1981). Generally, then, social

disorganization, stemming from a range of factors, can result, not only in the formation of new religious movements, but also aid in the growth and survival of existing religious organizations. Moreover,, the impact of these external social differences also determines the type of religious organization that a group will develop in a given social context.

The spread of the Rastafarian movement to other parts of the world was facilitated by a number of variables. The first and foremost of these was the commercialization of Reggae music. However, an antecedant variable to the escalating popularity of this music was the increase in population of West Indians who had migrated to metropolitan countries in the hope of ameliorating their economic position. From the period between the late forties and the sixties, migration of West Indians from Jamaica, increased dramatically (Barrett, 1968, Cashmore, 1979). For the most part, these migrants settled in the United Kingdom, predominantly in England. West Indian migration to Canada and the United States did not occur to the same extent, and also occurred at a later date.

It was these West Indian communities transposed into a foreign cultural milieu that formed the first market for West Indian music and food products in the host countries. Thus, the introduction of Reggae music found a ready market in these metropolitan countries, i.e. England, Canada and the United States. Nonetheless, the forms of Rastafarianism that emerged in all three social contexts differed to a large degree. It is the

nature of this difference between the various forms Jah that forms the core of the following discussion.

Cashmore's analysis of the Rastafarian movement forms the focal point of this examination of the English form of Jah. According to Cashmore, the West Indians migrated to England in an attempt to improve their social and economic lot. The choice of England by the immigrants was motivated solely on the grounds of an impression of familiarity particularly since Jamaica had been colonized by the English, and the latter's presence on the island served to stimulate the impression of familiarity. Moreover, according to the Commonwealth Countries official code, any persons residing in a country belonging to the British Commonwealth was welcome in both a member country and the mother country, i.e. England. Thus according to Cashmore, West Indian immigrants entertained great expectations regarding their proposed settlement in Britain. However, the unfeasibility of the fulfillment of these expectations became apparent after the arrival of the first wave of West Indian migrants.

The disillusionment of facing a racist society which denied them a sense of dignity and belonging became manifest in the retreatist position adopted by the West Indian group. According to Cashmore, the alienation stemming from the denial of full participation in the host society was to some degree channelled into religious participation in black Pentecostal churches. The highly emotive character of the services served as one device by which the frustrations faced by the group could be released.

Furthermore, the 'ghettoization' of the blacks into racially concentrated communities of the type present in Brixton¹² served as a buffer zone against the rest of society, and also perpetuated West Indian cultural patterns.

Cashmore indicates that substantial numbers of blacks were present in these ghetto communities. While the first generation of blacks, from the Caribbean, assumed a retreatist position and a generally low profile in the English context, the second generation of blacks adopted a wholly different strategy for dealing with their frustration and the alienation they experienced. These predominantly, young blacks articulated their protest against society through the formation of black gangs and the 'rude boy' complex. The rude boys who were similar to the skinhead groups in England,¹³ incorporated a specific style of dress and behaviour as their symbols of identification.

The rude boy phenomenon was, in part, derived from the Jamaican social context. Some of these 'rude boys' had arrived straight from Jamaica. Others, were second generation English blacks. Within Jamaica, the rude boys can be described as "...the hustlers and ratchetmen and small-time superflies of

¹² A predominantly black, economically depressed area of London, England.

¹³ Cashmore describes the skinheads as, "...working-class teenagers who cropped their hair, hoisted their trousers up to mid-calf and eased their feet into 'Dr. Marten' brand toe-capped working boots...Skinheads specialised in aggravation,..., directed at anyone noticeably deviant but most often Asians, overt homosexuals, motor-cycling Hells Angels and long-haired affiliates of the hippie persuasion (1979:41).

West Kingston. They haven't been to school and they can't get a job and a lot of the time they can't is because they don't want work'"(Cashmore, 1979:42). The rude boys resembled the skinheads in a number of ways, for example, they were sexist in their orientation, were extremely aggressive towards other minority groups in society, and adhered to similar symbols of identification as the skinheads.

A marriage between the two racially distinct groups occurred in the mid-sixties. The factors that promoted this coalition between the two groups was, in the first instance, an attraction on the part of the skinheads for the 'cool', slick style of the young blacks and, more importantly, an attraction to the black, Jamaican musical style, i.e. Rocksteady.¹⁴ There were other socio-economic factors which also mediated the coming together of the two groups. The main factor, in this regard, was the absence of blacks in commercial enterprises, a road to social mobility which was heavily relied upon by the Asians. Furthermore, in contrast to the Asians who had brought with them a rich cultural heritage which was highly exclusive and which endowed them with a sense of status and dignity, the blacks and the working class white youth who formed the mainspring of the rudies and the skinheads, lacked such an elaborate and rich cultural system.

¹⁴ Rocksteady was the precursor to the development of Reggae as a distinct musical style.

The mid-sixties, in England, were also marked by the appearance of the Black Power movement. In addition, various other black nationalistic organizations were formed. The impact of the presence of these groups on the black population in this geographic context resulted in a marked heightening of racial consciousness. The main structural feature in paving the way for the entrenchment of Rastafarianism amongst these second generation black youths, was the gang prototype which had been furnished by the rude boys.

The rude boys, it must be noted, had instituted the gang structure as the predominant form of social interaction amongst the peer group. These gangs contained approximately eight to ten individuals. The formation of this gang structure was itself a function of the other interacting variables. The West Indian family unit had become fragmented and exerted less power and influence amongst the black youth. This decline in familial influence can be attributed to the absence of one or both parents for long periods of time from the home. The socio-economic conditions forced both parents to work. Consequently, the presence and authority of the parental unit declined as a function of this extended absence from the domestic scene.

In addition, the racism rampant in the schools and other areas of social interaction with whites resulted in the increasing interaction between blacks who were pulled together by a sense of common identity and experience. Thus, groups of

West Indian blacks formed, embodying the rude boy image, in an effort to retaliate against the society which rejected them.

The shift from 'rudies' to Rastafarians, occurred as a result of the heightening of racial and social consciousness amongst these blacks. While the rude boy phenomenon had functioned effectively as a means of venting aggression, stemming from the lack of social acceptance and the resulting alienation, it was in the end a misdirected aggression against members of society that did not represent the power structure. It was an 'aimless' and highly emotive charged frustration that failed to lessen in any concrete manner the overall condition of the blacks. As Cashmore states,

Rudie was more a visceral phenomenon, less an intellectual one. Once the stability of group structure had been established, however, and the mists began to clear, thanks in part to the stimulating influence of black power, the core of the problem could be approached. It became apparent that some social analysis would reveal the causes of current discontent as rooted in structure rather than in individuals. And this awareness produced more conscious scanning for fresh ways to approach and tackle the problems. Ras Tafari was perfect... (1979:87).

Thus, the switch to Rastafarianism was a conscious and intellectual choice on the part of these black youth.

However, the fact that not all West Indian youth converted to the Rastafarian fold reflects on the differential nature of the youth's susceptibility and acceptance of Rastafarian ideas. In part, the degree of this susceptibility to fresh ways of reclaiming a sense of lost dignity and a causal explanation for the existing state of affairs was rooted in the particular

experiences of the individual with respect to his participation in society. Primary in this stock of experience was the racial discrimination directed against the black youth. Susceptibility to Rastafarianism was also facilitated by the individual's questioning of the reasons for the continued oppression of blacks and the concomitant reasons propelling racist attitudes and behaviours. For those individuals who had looked to the Black Power movement in Britain, the task became one of explaining the failure of this black response to the problem of inequality.

It is interesting to note that, according to Cashmore's account, the Rastafarian population in England is heavily comprised of blacks from the lower echelons of the socio-economic order. The Rastafarian movement in 1970, was composed of a membership of which seventy percent were males. The average age of the members was eighteen. Occupational background of members was largely working class. Most of the members were of Jamaican descent. Within the membership, fifty percent were unemployed, and forty five percent were manual workers (1979:70). In terms of education, most of the membership had 'dropped out' of the educational process at some stage.

For these blacks, who had failed to achieve success as defined by mainstream society, the drift into Rastafarianism became a gradual process. The Rastafarian tradition was defined, as a sufferer's movement which effectively explained the nature of society as the manifestation of the biblical Babylon, and

formulated the role of the blacks as the chosen people who would be repatriated to Zion. Rastafarianism, within the English context, provided for these blacks as sense of identity and racial pride. It fostered a sense of distinctiveness and a specific cultural lifestyle in response to the conditions which prevailed amongst the blacks.

The presence of Rastafarian themes and concepts was the crucial variable in the emergence of this tradition in England. By far, the most influential factor in the dissemination of the Rastafarian message in England was the medium of Reggae music. However, it was the prophetic role of Bob Marley, the former king of Reggae music, that stimulated the acceptance and popularity of the Rastafarian message in England. According to Cashmore:

West Indians were in a situation which necessitated them organising themselves and adapting their qualities and resources to cope with existing situations. They were in an identity vacuum. Starved of the opportunity to be English and stripped of the material and cultural supports to sustain a wholly Jamaican character, the more energetic Jamaicans saw in Marley a ray of hope for a future identity based on an acute recognition of and sensitivity to the blacks' African and its bearing on future world events. The first exposures to the music and the physical presence of Marley were the first steps to the creation of an incipient corporate existence. (1979:114).

As one Rastafarian stated, "Personally, I accepted Ras Tafari long before Marley became big, but for many he brought across the message, you know, seeds to be cultivated in the different land, to grow into a new consciousness. (Cashmore, 1979:114).

Bob Marley became the Rastafarian model which the English blacks sought to emulate. He embodied the Rastafarian tradition

in a human form which could be identified with by the second generation of West Indian blacks. Unlike other 'protest singers' Marley not only articulated protest against the established order but communicated it through the religious rhetoric of Rastafarianism (White, 1983). Marley's message found success amongst the West Indian blacks in England as a result of the existence of specific pre-conditions such as the estrangement of black youth from the religious orientations of their parents, the decline of parental influence on the youth, their awareness and experience of racism, their disaffection with traditional means of achieving social change, the loss of legitimacy of traditional social agencies of mobility, and a growing recognition of the viability and legitimacy of Rastafarianism.

Within the English variant of Rastafarianism, three groups have emerged. These are, a branch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, a number of locals of the Ethiopian World Federation, and a branch of the Twelve Tribes organization. In the English context, the Ethiopian World Federation locals embody the political orientation of Rastafarianism, whilst the Ethiopian Orthodox Church forms as their religious counterparts. The degree of rivalry between groups, while not as intense as in Jamaica, is an everpresent factor.

It is clear from Cashmore's account, that even in the English context, the membership expresses varying degrees of commitment and interpretation of the Rastafarian belief system. The most committed Rastafarians, he defines, as one believing in

the divinity of Haile Selassie. In terms of a collective group representation of specific interpretations of the Rastafarian tradition in its English variant, Cashmore does not offer any substantive analysis of this issue. What is most interesting about the the Ethiopian World Federation locals and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church branch in England, is that both organizations were originally formed for specific reasons and in specific geographical areas. As such, neither group is an original precipitatum from the substratum of the Rastafarian mystic collectivity. Rather, the Rastafarians in England and Jamaica have adopted these groups and have, over a period of time and through an increase in the Rastafarian membership, come to dominate these groups such that the original philosophies of the groups have come to acquire Rastafarian characteristics. This is particularly true of the Ethiopian World Federation, of which the first Jamaican local was begun by a Rastafarian. In the case of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, this analysis is not completely applicable since the church elite is appointed and services are controlled by the heads of the church in Ethiopia.

With respect to the presence of the Twelve Tribes in England, it is clear from Cashmore's account, that the popularity of the group is based on its close connection with the Reggae musical scene. Moreover, Bob Marley's affiliation to this group has also influenced the growth of this group's membership. It is not apparent from the literature of the movement in England, what the nature of the Twelve Tribes

organization is in the English context. However, it may be safe to assume that a similar type of structure prevails amongst the Twelve Tribes in England as exists in its Jamaican counterpart.

In its totality, the form of Rastafarianism in England has the same acephalous and reticulate character as in its Jamaican form. Members, in the English context, display a lesser inclination to affiliate to any particular subgroup. The major differentiating factor between the Jamaican form and the English form of Jah lies in the differences between the two societies and the position and aspirations of blacks in these societies. In contrast to Jamaica, the West Indian blacks entered England as migrants with aspirations of having a positive reception, and of bettering their socio-economic status. Another factor responsible for the differences between the two forms of Rastafarianism is the differential needs of the membership in these separate social contexts and the resulting differences in the interpretations and orientations they exercised. Rastafarianism, in England, was a conscious choice undertaken on the part of the blacks to find some meaningful belief system which granted them a sense of dignity and pride which was denied to them in society. While, the Rastafarian movement, in essence, services similar needs for its membership in Jamaica, the factors contributing to the creation of these needs differ dramatically. Within Jamaica, the consequences of slavery and colonialism were the determining factors. In England, denial of participation in society, stemming from the particular power

structure in that society and its manifestation in the form of structural racism combined to create these needs for identity, pride, and for some sort of positive and affirming belief system.

The Canadian manifestation of Rastafarianism differs somewhat from its Jamaican and English counterpart. Yet similarities do exist in all these different forms. Even in the Canadian context, the movement is acephalous and contains within it varying interpretations of the Rastafarian belief system. At present, only a small sample of the Rastafarian population in Canada has been studied and this particular study focused on the Rastafarian group residing in Toronto, a major Canadian city. In addition, the material presented in this section is drawn from observations and interviews with the Rastafarians in Vancouver.

Most of the Rastafarians residing in these two major Canadian cities are immigrants from Jamaica. A small percentage have migrated from other areas of the Caribbean. The movement in the Canadian context¹⁵ is also male dominated, although statistics in terms of the size of the population and other demographic characteristics are unavailable. As has been indicated, the membership contains a small portion of non-blacks. Unlike the English and Jamaican forms of Rastafarianism which are quite militant in terms of their political and social consciousness, the Rastafarians in Canada

¹⁵I am referring to to the Canadian context largely on the basis of the presence of Rastafarians in Toronto and Vancouver, although there are Rastafarians in Winnipeg, Edmonton, Montreal, and in small numbers across Canada (Wilson, 1978, and personal communication with the Vancouver Rastafarians).

appear to be less militant about political events, and are generally more oriented to the religious nature of the belief system. This is, in part, due to the nature of Canadian society and the position of the Rastafarians within it.

In the first instance, Canada's race relations policy differs dramatically from that of England or Jamaica. Secondly, the size of the black population in Canada is significantly lower than it is in either Jamaica or England. This can be deduced from the fact that the blacks comprise 99% of the population in Jamaica, and in England, ghettoization has produced a number of black communities. Both of these features are absent in the Canadian context. Moreover, the geographic size of both England and Jamaica is drastically smaller than Canada. This factor is important since in terms of perceived population size, the black population in England, which even though it may be numerically low, will appear to be larger given the small geographic area of the country. In Canada, the vast geographic area combined with the large number of urban, metropolitan centres serves to diffuse any potential concentration of ethnic groups and lowers their profile in society.

The multi-cultural policy, formulated by the Canadian government in 1972 encourages ethnic minorities to practice and retain their cultural heritage and lifestyle. Furthermore, the presence of multiple ethnic minorities in the Canadian context lessens any potential pressures towards acculturation and the

possibility of designating an ethnic group as being deviant because of its position outside the cultural mainstream of society. In addition, in contrast to either English or American society, where such a cultural mainstream exists and is entrenched in the social context, the Canadian situation differs in that it lacks a clearly defined cultural mainstream and the lines between the various socio-economic classes are ill-defined.

Thus, West Indians and other entering Canadian society as immigrants are not subjected to the same treatment as for example in the English context. They are, in a sense, accorded the same rights and privileges as other visible ethnic minorities.¹⁶ In the Canadian West Coast area, blacks hold a very different position compared to their status in either England or the United States. In a sense, the blacks in this area are the recipients of what has been termed as 'reverse racism' (Dutton, personal communication, 1978). In other words, blacks are positively reinforced and are a novelty because of their 'cool' attitude and behaviour. ¹⁷ Black music, and style of dance attract considerable attention. To be a part of the black subculture or to socialize with blacks was considered to

¹⁶ This is not to say that racism does not exist in Canada, rather, the degree of racism directed towards the black population differs in intensity from that present in England. Moreover, the target group for racist attacks are, by and large, the E. Indian minority in Canada.

¹⁷ This is only now beginning to change, and it may be a result of the growing numbers of blacks in this area.

be 'cool'. The mystique of black was then a source of considerable positive reaction on the part of Canadian youth.

It can be seen that within the Canadian context, the factors of intense racism and a denial of full participation in society are absent. Rather, the society in general promotes the retention of ethnic cultures and patterns, and a generally positive response to blacks in Western Canada prevails. Blacks are also granted the same rights as members of other ethnic minorities. Racism, though present, is not as intense as in other social contexts, and in comparison with other societies, blacks are not the target group for these racist attacks.

Rastafarianism, within the Canadian context, has not incited the reaction that it has in the English context. Furthermore, contrary to the English context where affiliation to the movement was motivated by a conscious choice on the part of potential members and was determined by the impact of the external conditions of racism and lack of suitable ideology, the Rastafarian movement in Canada has emerged as a result of a wholly different set of factors.

The Canadian variant of Rastafarianism has emerged largely as a result of the migration factor and the influence of Reggae music. These two factors have interacted to pave the way for the development of a distinctly Canadian variant of the Rastafarian mystic collectivity. This variant manifests, on the whole, a religious interpretation of the Rastafarian belief system. Moreover, the Rastafarian variant also contains a portion of

non-black Canadian members. It can also be argued that the movement in Canada contains a substantial number of pseudo-Rastafarians who utilize the belief system to legitimate behaviours that are not in conformity with the norms of society. Rastafarians, in Canada, also exhibit a more syncretistic orientation, merging the teachings of the Rastafarian tradition with other religious orientations. ¹⁸

In a sense, it is difficult to discuss the Canadian variant in a monolithic sense. The movement, even in this context contains varying interpretations and orientations. There are, amongst the Canadian Rastafarians, those members who are deeply committed to the religious interpretation of the belief system. These members resemble the Nyahbinghi members of Jamaica in their attitude towards the imminent nature of repatriation and the role they attribute to Haile Selassie as the messiah and incarnation of God. There are others amongst the Canadian membership who adhere to the precepts of the Rastafarian livity, but interpret the role of Haile Selassie more as a prophet whose main function was to show the path to salvation, where salvation is conceived of in this-worldly terms but does not include Africa in a material sense. Africa, within this interpretation, is accorded a more spiritual status and is equated to the goal of self-realization. ¹⁹

¹⁸ This is most apparent in the case of the Rastafarian Yogi, I alluded to earlier.

¹⁹ From personal interview with a brother visiting Vancouver.

There are other members, in this Canadian variant, who are drawn to the movement on the grounds that it offers a cultural lifestyle and belief which is self-affirming. For these members, the function of Rastafarianism, as a source of identity and racial pride is the most appealing factor. However, there are members, within the Canadian context, who are drawn to the movement because it provides them with a sense of belonging, and for others, membership in a somewhat 'deviant but exclusive' club. It is to the latter that the appeal of Rastafarianism translates into the novelty of dreadlocks, the anti-establishment rhetoric, the use of a special argot, the treatment of marijuana as a sacrament, and brotherhood into a preconceived image of a 'special group'. It is this group that forms the prototype of the pseudo-Rastafarian. It is also within this group, that Rastafarianism is used to legitimate such forms of 'deviant behaviour' as the smoking of marijuana.

The other factor responsible for the spread of the movement to Canada has been Reggae music. Attraction to Reggae music is based on two preceding variables. Firstly, attraction to Reggae music may be due to the music itself, in terms of its particular musical style and emphasis on bass. Secondly, attraction to the music may be attributed to the appeal of its lyrics. Most of Reggae music is concerned with socio-political themes. For those people who are already politically inclined in terms of possessing a measure of political and social consciousness, attraction to Reggae music is a natural outcome of these

pre-existing elements. This is more so if the individual identifies himself with the position of the urban Jamaican sufferer (who is the the main subject of Reggae songs). It can be assumed that an individual who is attracted to Reggae music, identifies with it, and experiences a certain measure of alienation and marginality will be drawn to the Rastafarian belief system. However, total commitment to the belief system would entail an acceptance of the main precept, i.e. a belief in the divinity of Haile Selassie and in the vision of African repatriation. It is obvious that the individual would have to be inclined towards a religious worldview and have a pre-existing bias towards Africa. Nonetheless, the individual, even without the interaction and presence of these other variables could express his own interpretation and orientation to the belief system. ²⁰

In Canada, the Rastafarian movement remains without a leader and contains none of the organizational types found in its counterparts in either England or Jamaica. Gerlach and Hines (1968) criteria of the factors contributing to the growth of religious movements applies to the Canadian variant as well. In part, the growth of Rastafarianism in Canada can be attributed to the general decline of traditional religious bodies (Stark

²⁰ I have met some individuals who style themselves as Rastafarians wearing dreadlocks and other symbols of identification, and who appear to have no knowledge of the other precepts of the belief system, e.g. the belief in the repatriation of all blacks to Africa. (Personal interview, July, 1982).

and Bainbridge, 1981). However, it is clear that the general orientation of Canadian society in terms of its tolerance for different cultural lifestyles is an important factor contributing to the survival of the movement in Canada.

Even within the Canadian variant of Rastafarianism, despite the differences in interpretations, the features of the mystic collectivity are still operative. However, the major differentiating feature between the collectivity as manifest in Jamaica or England versus that which prevails in Canada is the emphasis on different features that form the common denominator of the Rastafarian mystic collectivity. Within Jamaica and England, the features of the common historical experience of 'dread' - oppression and persecution through slavery and colonialism are highly emphasized. In the Canadian context, however, it is the common attraction to Reggae music and aspects of the Rastafarian livity such as the emphasis on the natural as opposed to the artificial that are accentuated. Yet all the common denominators binding the mystic collectivity are present in all three contexts, and it is only the degree of their emphases that differs from one environment to another.

In conclusion, it can be seen that the forms of Jah as manifest in England, Canada and Jamaica, although similar in some aspects, differ quite markedly in others. The differences between these variants of Rastafarianism are above all due to the differences in the respective social contexts. The specific variables that account for these differences within the social

contexts examined are the the society's general attitude and perception of blacks, racism directed at blacks and more particularly the Rastafarians.

Other studies of the forms of Rastafarianism that have emerged in other areas of the Caribbean report a highly political interpretation of the Rastafarian belief system (Campbell, 1980b). To a degree, this political orientation reflects the needs of the Rastafarian membership in those socio-political contexts for a suitable ideology by which to change the existing power structure in those societies. It can be seen that the needs of the membership, which to a large extent stem from the social conditions extant in society, influence the interpretation of Rastafarianism that will emerge in that particular social context.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the Rastafarian movement from the theoretical framework of the typologies of religious organizations within the sociology of religion. A description of the evolution of the movement in its indigenous context reveals that the Rastafarian tradition has developed an intricate belief system, with a correlating Rastafarian 'livity'. An examination of the precipitating factors of the Rastafarian movement reveals that both the external socio-economic conditions in Jamaica and the existence of an appropriate religious and cultural environment were influential factors in the emergence of Rastafarianism. The genesis of the movement in these conditions was also stimulated by the charismatic presence and philosophy of Marcus Garvey. However, the crucial factor involved, in the interaction of these other variables, was the particular interpretation of Garvey's reputed message "Look to Africa when a Black King shall be crowned, for the day of deliverance is near", (Kitzinger, 1969), espoused by a group of Jamaicans, some of who were affiliated with Garvey's movement. The latter, it was noted, came from markedly varying religious backgrounds.

It is clear from this account of the movement's beginnings, that Rastafarianism did not emerge from a social vacuum. Rather, it is apparent that the social and economic conditions and the impact of slavery had created a particular social environment and a particular set of needs amongst the indigenous people. These needs had, historically, found expression and fulfillment

in religion (Campbell, 1980b). The religious milieu in Jamaica, during this period, was populated by a wide variety of groups ranging from purely Christian groups to African occult oriented groups. Within this context, the presence of Ethiopianism as an African-oriented philosophy espousing a strongly millenarian concept of salvation which emphasized the special position of Ethiopia and the black race, reflects on the prevailing needs of the indigenous people and their search for a self-affirming ideology which would enable them to reclaim a sense of dignity previously denied by the power elite dominating Jamaica.

The publication of such books as the 'Holy Piby' or the black man's bible, and other popular literature expounding beliefs in the supremacy of the black race and the impending destruction of white domination reveals the nature of the underlying needs on the part of the population, for a belief system which would fulfill these needs by providing them with a sense of dignity, racial pride and social status.

The specific interpretation arrived at by the first Rastafarians was due in part to these external social conditions which formed a basis for their individual experiences. However, in sociological terms, this interpretation was the result of the process of 'elective affinities'. These founding members of Rastafarianism proceeded to derive from Garvey's message hopes and aspirations which corresponded to their personal beliefs. This is not to deny, however, the role of subjective experiences such as visions and dreams which may have had a profound

impression on these individuals. Nonetheless, it is apparent that the early variant of Rastafarianism in Jamaica, did not contain the highly complex and intricate theology, a concept of livity and linguistic style that it embodies in its contemporary form.

It is clear, from the review of the literature on the Rastafarian movement, that its founders infused elements of their previous religious training and orientation into the initial creed and worldview of Rastafarianism. Unlike Islam which centres on a body of revealed social laws and prescriptions guiding all manner of social interactions and a highly defined set of rites and rituals, the Rastafarian movement did not generate a body of corresponding rites and rituals and or a specific lifestyle until a later stage in its development. As Howell's 'Promised Key' reveals, these aspects of Rastafarian livity religious precepts were moreover, influenced by the first formulators of the Rastafarian religion.

In the course of the movement's history, several factors were noted as being influential in shaping its overall direction. These have been discussed in some detail in the preceding chapters. The consequences of historical events such as the Emperor's visit to Jamaica in 1966, and the publication of the University study conducted in 1960 served to stimulate public and academic interest in the movement. Other events such as the Claudius Henry fiasco in the late fifties also focused a considerable degree of public attention on the Rastafarian

movement. In addition, the government's interest in the movement was also stimulated based on popular perception of the movement as a threat to social stability and more particularly to the white dominated status-quo.

Aside from the negative public image suffered by the Rastafarians as a result of such events as Claudius Henry's attempted coup d'etat, the movement was also subjected to persecution in the form of government retaliation. Rastafarian communes such as Pinnacle were raided, concentrated urban ghettos such as Back O'Wall were destroyed, and isolated incidents of Rastafarians being harrassed by agencies of social control were common local events. Yet, Rastafarian membership swelled and the movement continued to expand to other areas of the Caribbean and some other parts of the world.

An examination of the movement's history reveals that several Rastafarian groups were extant in its early stages, and further, many other groups have formed since then. The nature of these groups, in the early stages of the movement's growth, differed in terms of their approach and practice of the Rastafarian faith. Moreover, differences existed in terms of the rural versus urban formulation and practice of Rastafarian precepts. This is most apparent in the urban, ghetto based House of the Youth Black Faith and Howell's commune, Pinnacle, in the rural areas of St. Catherines. In addition, differences also existed in terms of the structure of these various groups.

Literature on the Rastafarians reveals that while some of these early groups were organized along ordered and clearly defined lines, others were more loosely bound aggregates. (Barrett, 1968, Kitzinger, 1964, 1969, Simpson, 1955a, 1955b, Smith, et al, 1960). While some of these organizations have survived till today, others have died out or evolved into different forms.

Studies of the Rastafarian movement, though recognizing the existence of these various groups, have offered little in terms of substantive analyses of these groups. On the contrary, most of the studies have either typified the movement as a 'cult', using the term in a popular and pejorative sense, while others have classified the movement as a millenarian messianic movement drawing their analyses from Simpson's early account (1955a, 1955b). On the whole, the majority of these studies have treated the movement as a monolithic entity without taking into consideration the varying groups extant, the differential degrees of commitment manifested by individual Rastafarians and the range of interpretations of the central belief system operative in the Rastafarian tradition.

The analysis undertaken in this thesis has been motivated, in part, by the drawbacks of the literature on the Rastafarian movement. Moreover, studies of the Rastafarian movement, to date, have not focused on the differences between the various forms of Rastafarianism existing in different geographic contexts. This thesis has attempted to comparatively analyze the

differences between the forms of Jah in terms of the manifestations of Rastafarianism in the Canadian, English and Jamaican contexts.

Utilizing the theoretical literature on typologies of religious organizations, the findings of this thesis indicate that rather than approaching the type of religious organization characteristic of either a 'cult' or 'sect', the Rastafarian movement as a whole can be described more accurately as a 'mystic collectivity', a concept formulated by Campbell (1972). This concept of the mystic collectivity brings together two separate theoretical constructs, i.e. the social collectivity on the one hand, and the religious tradition of mysticism on the other. Campbell has clearly drawn from the functionalist tradition in his formulation of social collectivities. His use of mystical religion is derived from Troeltsch's treatment of the mystical element in Christianity.

The distinguishing features of Campbell's concept of the mystic collectivity correspond to certain features of Rastafarianism. In essence, Campbell's concept of the mystic collectivity describes a social collectivity which is loosely bound by common denominators such as a common worldview, role expectations, common interests etc. The element of mysticism introduces a religious dimension to the range of common denominators tying together the loosely defined social collectivity. The mystical element then changes the overall nature of the social collectivity. However, in contrast to the

sect and other types of religious organizations, the mystic collectivity is anchored in the religion of mysticism. The latter, according to Troeltsch, differed from other streams of religious thought present within Christianity.

Mystical religion, in its pure Troeltchean formulation, correlates to some aspects of the Rastafarian belief system. Aspects of mystical religion can be found in the Rastafarian beliefs in terms of the perception of the body as the true church, the internal 'psychological' communication with the 'spirit of Jah', and generally the Rastafarian explanation of the causes of the perpetual oppression of blacks, the process whereby release can be sought, and the nature of the final goal of redemption through repatriation. It must be noted that Troeltsch's discussion of mystical religion treated the latter in its pure form. Hence, any anomalies rising from a comparison with empirical cases does not necessarily lead to a rejection of this potential tool of analysis.

While there are elements of mystical religion found in the Rastafarian case, the latter also manifests other features that correspond with both the ideal typical features of a sect and a cult. Within this dichotomy of sect and cult, the Rastafarian movement approaches neither a wholly sectarian religious organization nor a wholly cultic one. Moreover, the movement contains several groups which embody different organizational forms. While some of these groups resemble the ideal typical features of a sect, others are more oriented towards the type of

religious organization characteristic of a cult.

Campbell's concept of the mystic collectivity is useful in describing the Rastafarian case in terms of the existence of multiple religious groups within the umbrella of Rastafarianism. According to Campbell, the mystic collectivity precipitates groups from its substratum. These groups embody an orientation that differs from the collectivity as a whole. While some of groups survive, others simply die out. In the Rastafarian case, the propensity towards the 'fusion and fission' of groups has been extant since the genesis of the movement in the 1930's.

The Rastafarian movement then, approximates Campbell's concept of the mystic collectivity. Within the mystic collectivity of the Rastafarians, a spectrum of groups co-exist. At one extreme of this spectrum are the religious groups, whilst at the other end of the spectrum are the more politically inclined groups. Between these two extremes are groups espousing a more cultural interpretation of Rastafarianism. The concept of the mystic collectivity is also useful in describing the various levels of commitment that are expressed by the membership. While certain common denominators prevail throughout the Rastafarian mystic collectivity, there are differences with respect to the differential levels of commitment and interpretations expressed by individual Rastafarians.

An analysis of some of these groups, e.g. the Order of the Nyabbinghi, the Bobo Shantis, the Twelve Tribes of Israel and the Rastafarian Movement Association, reveals that in each of

the groups, features corresponding to the different types of religious organizations exist. Hence, the organization of the Order of the Nyahbinghi comes closest to the ideal typical features of the revolutionist sect. Similarly, the Bobo Shantis manifest features which correspond with those of the Introversionist sect. It was found that with the Twelve Tribes of Israel, the organization approximated to that of the ideal typical cult, albeit of the 'local' type discussed by Nelson (1969). While Wilson's criteria of sects in terms of a religious group's response to the world describes the Rastafarian movement in its totality as a sect, it was felt that the concept of the mystic collectivity apprehended, in a more accurate manner, the Rastafarian movement.

The mystic collectivity of the Rastafarians has also precipitated other groups which differ from the general orientation of the collectivity. These are the more politically inclined groups which represent political interpretations of Rastafarianism. In contrast to the messianic millenarian interpretation of the religious groups within the collectivity, the politically oriented groups are in the first instance interested in social reform in society, and secondly translate their aspirations for repatriation into concrete actions. Hence, these groups are active in terms of lobbying the state and other international bodies, seeking repatriation through the channels of immigration and also demanding monetary recompense for their forced migration and labour in colonized countries.

It is apparent from the literature that the membership is not homogenous in terms of the degree of commitment and the uniformity in interpretation. Rather, various types of Rastafarians populate the mystic collectivity. Thus, the membership can be described as composing of religious Rastafarians, political Rastafarians, functional Rastafarians and what I proposed to term pseudo-Rastafarians (Albuquerque, 1977, Barrett, 1977, Nettleford, 1972). Essentially, the religious Rastafarians are ones who are deeply committed to the Rastafarian religion. Political Rastafarians are ones who espouse a political interpretation of Rastafarianism. Functional Rastafarians utilize the Rastafarianism as a means by which to implement change in society through social reform etc. This group is primarily composed of university students, middle-class youth and academics. The distinction between the functional and political Rastafarians is rooted in their particular approach to social change. The political Rastafarians espouse a more dramatic concept of social change which resembles that of revolution and destruction of the social order. The functional Rastafarians are more interested in reform, and although they may entertain aspirations of total change, the latter is conceptualized more in terms of a rebellion than a revolution, such that the power structure remains intact, but the particular individuals are changed. The pseudo-Rastafarians, by contrast, are drawn to the movement on the grounds of its novelty, its use of ganja as a sacrament, its message in the form of Reggae

music, its anti-establishment rhetoric and generally its status as a deviant protest movement. Although such 'self serving' motives for initial identification may, depending on exposure, degree of sympathy etc. be replaced by a more whole-hearted 'valid' commitment to the faith.

This thesis argues that the different groups extant in the Rastafarian movement represent collective expressions of the various interpretations of the belief system. The charismatic quality of leaders of these various groups draw adherents whose individual orientations and interpretations coincide with those of the leader. In most cases, however, it is the charisma of the leaders that results in the membership in the group even if the individual's personal orientations are undefined or different from those of the leader. Nonetheless, it is apparent that even the membership exercise a measure of elective affinities in their choice of a group that best conforms to their personal orientations.

The Rastafarian mystic collectivity can be envisioned as a series of concentric circles revolving around a central core. The core, in this schema, represents the highly committed religious interpretation of Rastafarianism. Members within the collectivity also recognize this core group as representing an extreme religious orientation towards the Rastafarian belief system. Other groups occupy different positions on the concentric rings surrounding the core. The further a group is away from the core, in terms of these concentric rings, the more

worldly is their interpretation of Rastafarianism. Hence, the pseudo-Rastafarians would be located on the outer most concentric ring. A group such as the Order of the Nyahbinghi would form the core of this schematic representation.

However, this schematic description of the Rastafarian mystic collectivity only corresponds with the contemporary status of the movement in its indigenous context. In the forms of Rastafarianism that have emerged in other social contexts, the range of groups precipitated by the collectivity is more limited, and in some cases non-existent. This difference between the manifestation of Rastafarianism in Jamaica as compared to England for example, is due largely to the differences in the social contexts, and to the varying needs of the membership in these different areas.

An examination of the form of Jah present in the English context reveals that the West Indian blacks in England had in the first instance migrated to the country and entertained expectations which were not fulfilled by the host country, and as a result, some of the children of these original immigrants chose to affiliate to the movement as a function of its ability to satisfy the particular needs they experienced. In contrast, the Canadian manifestation of Rastafarianism resulted from the migration of West Indians to Canada, the latter's tolerant attitude towards ethnic cultures, and the growing popularity of Reggae music which is the vital mechanism for the dissemination of Rastafarian themes and concepts.

While the blacks in England found in Rastafarianism a self-affirming belief system which granted them a sense of racial pride and dignity, and above all an identity as an African, Rastafarians in Canada utilized the belief system to satisfy other needs. It has been argued that the societal response to blacks in Canada differs significantly from that directed to blacks in either England or Jamaica. This difference in response is due to a number of factors such as the different socio-economic structures in these societies, the perception in terms of the number of blacks and the degree of racism directed at black minorities in these social contexts.

In the English context, three major groups are extant in the collectivity. These are the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the Ethiopian World Federation locals, and the Twelve Tribes of Israel organization. Aside from the latter which is a Jamaican based group, both the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian World Federation locals are groups adopted by the Rastafarians and were not originally precipitated by the collectivity. Furthermore, unlike the Jamaican form of Rastafarianism where intense rivalry and competition between the various groups is apparent, the intensity of this competition is restricted in the English case between the members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Twelve Tribes of Israel. While considerable friction exists between the Ethiopian World Federation locals and the Twelve Tribes organization, the relationship between the former and the Ethiopian Orthodox

Church is highly complementary. The latter incorporates a religious interpretation for the Rastafarians while the Ethiopian World Federation locals represent the political element amongst the membership (Cashmore, 1977).

The Canadian variant of Rastafarianism also contains non-black members. These non-black members are largely from white racial backgrounds, although, members from other racial backgrounds such as E. Indians, are present in the total membership. Amongst the non-black members there is a higher incidence of females as compared to males. This difference, stems in part, from the factor of pre-existing relationships that these females may have had with black males. On the other hand, females in the Canadian context may be more attracted to Rastafarian males. To an extent the overall positive attitudes towards blacks in Canadian society may be the determining variable. There is also the possibility that females are drawn to the movement because of the defined roles prescribed to them, and the respect they are accorded by Rastafarian males.

While demographic information on the Rastafarians in Canada is unavailable, it is apparent from observations of the community in Vancouver, Canada that the average age of the members is between twenty three and thirty five. This differs from the English variant where the average age is eighteen. In both contexts, the movement is male dominated and members are generally unemployed or are manual workers. However, within the Canadian context, class lines are not as clearly demarcated as

they are in England. In general, Rastafarians in Canada are relatively better off in economic terms than their English counterparts.

A comparison of the Rastafarian movement in these two distinctly different geographic areas reveals that the needs of the membership is a crucial variable in determining the form of Rastafarianism that will emerge. The factors contributing to these needs are rooted in the external socio-economic and cultural variables present in the social context. Hence the forms of Jah, are essentially the result of the interaction between the specific socio-economic factors prevailing in society, the corresponding needs of the membership, their interpretation of Rastafarianism and the availability of Rastafarian themes and concepts in the particular social contexts.

With respect to the rapid growth and spread of the movement in the last five decades, Gerlach and Hines (1968) criteria of factors promoting the growth of religious movements were found to be operative in the Rastafarian case. The acephalous and reticulate nature of the Rastafarian mystic collectivity combined with the emphasis on face-to-face interaction, a 'change-oriented' ideology, and a 'grape-vine' system of internal communication serve to promote the rapid growth and spread of the Rastafarian mystic collectivity.

In conclusion, this thesis demonstrates the utility of the concept of the mystic collectivity in relation to an analysis of

the Rastafarian movement. Rather than a cult or a sect, the Rastafarian movement approximates more accurately to a mystic collectivity. In addition, the concept of the mystic collectivity is useful in an analysis of the multiple groups that co-exist within the Rastafarian movement. Moreover, the nature of these various groups indicate that while some approach the characteristics of the ideal typical sect, others correspond more to the ideal type of cult. While some groups in the collectivity represent a religious orientation of the belief system, others espouse a more politically inclined interpretation. This feature is in keeping with the concept of the mystic collectivity which precipitates groups that embody orientations not readily found in the common denominators binding the collectivity.

The future direction of the mystic collectivity of the Rastafarians may involve a drift towards a more sectarian type of organization. The tendency towards sectarianism is beginning to manifest itself in the active proselytizing role of the Nyahbinghi Order. This group has been sending members to other Caribbean islands and England with a view towards introducing a uniform interpretation of the Rastafarian belief system. This evolution into a sectarian type of organization corresponds to Wallis's (1975) typology of the transition of cults to sects. However, there are various factors which may potentially impede this transition from a mystic collectivity to a more sectarian type of organization. First and foremost is the intense rivalry

and competition that exists between the various groups. While Ras Boanarges is perceived as a legitimate elder in the Rastafarian community in Jamaica, and by other leaders of the various organizations, his potential leadership over the movement as a whole would incite considerable hostility on the part of these other leaders. Moreover, even if the a standard interpretation of the Rastafarian faith were introduced in the mystic collectivity, it is more than likely that competing interpretations would emerge as a result of the presence of other personalities such as Sam Brown. In addition, the early history of the movement reveals that even though Boanarges was the 'Akee' man or recognized leader of the House of the Youth Black Faith, dissension on the various aspects of the livity still resulted in schisms within this organization.

Another potential obstacle in the evolution of the Rastafarian mystic collectivity to a sectarian form of religious organization is the state. The Jamaican government has, in the past, attempted to ensure the existence of multiple groups within the movement, as for example in the issue as to which Rastafarian group should send a member in the 1961 mission to Africa. The reason underlying this action stems from the rationale that the movement, if mobilized by a charismatic leader with a revolutionary ethic, could mobilize and initiate a revolution in Jamaica. Thus, by ensuring the existence of multiple groups within the movement, the government has created one viable route by which potentially revolutionary energy is

channelled off, i.e. in the rivalry between the groups rather than a collective, mobilized aggression against the state.

Some Rastafarians clearly recognize the implications of this strategy, and it is this realization that has, in part, prompted the actions of the Nyahbinghi Order. Yet, given the nature of these obstacles, it is more likely that the movement will continue as a mystic collectivity precipitating a wide range of groups which incorporate orientations not prevalent in the Rastafarian tradition.

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