

Introduction: The Rastafari Phenomenon

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Seldom has such a relatively small cultural phenomenon as Rastafari attracted so much attention from young people, the media, and scholars in the fields of religion, anthropology, politics, and sociology. The signature long, natty dreads on the heads of Rastafarians, who fearlessly chant down Babylon (Western political and economic domination and cultural imperialism) with the help of reggae music, make Rastafari a highly visible movement and "one of the most powerful cultural forces among youths in Jamaica"¹ and in countries around the world where one least expects to find elements of Afro-Caribbean culture. Between the 1930s and the 1950s, few people bothered to study the significance of the political and ideological concepts in Rastafarian culture. Even Jamaicans who may have understood the philosophy of the movement regarded Rastafari as another passing fad, which would die a natural death once the novelty wore off.² Former Rastafarian and practicing psychologist Leahcim Tefani Semaj noted that during this phase of the movement, the dominant public opinion toward the Rastafarians was "The damn Rasta dem, wey de Rasta dem want, we just put dem in a damn boat and put dem out in the sea and sink the boat—say dem want go Africa!"³

Prior to the 1970s, images of the unsanitary-looking, marijuana-smoking "Natty Dread" with unkempt dreadlocks, often controlling crime-infested streets of Kingston, New York City, or London were the most common perceptions of Rastafarian culture. These stereotypes still persist today among some people in the Caribbean, the United States, and Great Britain. Since the early 1970s, however, Rastafari (the movement's self-styled name) has been recognized not only as one of the most popular Afro-Caribbean religions of the late twentieth century, gaining even more popularity than Voodoo, but also as one of the leading cultural trends in the world; as such, it demands attention from those who study the religions of people who live at the economic and political margins of Western society. A June 1997 estimate puts the number of practicing Rastafarians worldwide at one million,⁴ with more than twice that number of sympathizers and many million more reggae fans. Given its humble beginnings

and the unfriendly climate in which Rastafari was born, none of its founders could have dreamed of such international exposure and acceptance.

What is it about this movement—developing in the slums of West Kingston, Jamaica—that makes it so appealing to people of very different nationalities, ethnic backgrounds, socioeconomic standings, and academic interests? Rastafari has invited myriad questions in popular culture and the academy, especially as part of the recent surge of interest in this once “insignificant” twentieth-century phenomenon. Among the issues addressed herein are the basic doctrinal beliefs of Rastafarians and how they differ from Christian beliefs; why Rastafarians are so hostile to Christianity but so dependent on Christian traditions in developing their ideology, teachings, and cultic practices; whether a relationship exists between Rastafari and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and how African Rastafari is; what inspired Rastas in the first place to make Haile Selassie such a towering figure and deity in the movement, and whether his divinity and kingship are still central to Rastafarian thought; what the role of women is in this overtly patriarchal and “chauvinist” movement; whether the Rastafarians are a religious group or a political organization, dopers supporting (or running) drug cartels under the guise of religion or authentic religious devotees; whether Rastas are anti-white prophets, preaching a doctrine of reverse racism and hate in society, or social critics; and what it means for Rastas to “chant down Babylon,” and who or what Babylon is.

Who or What Is Rastafari?

In *Chanting Down Babylon*, we use the terms *Rastafari*,⁵ *Rastafarians*, and *Rastas* synonymously. The nomenclature *Rastafari*, with or without the definite article, describes the movement as a collective whole, and the combined expression “Jah Ras Tafari” refers specifically to Emperor Haile Selassie I, the deity. Rastas often replace the title *Jah* with *Rastafari*, a designation coined by the early founders of the movement (especially Leonard Howell), who recognized Emperor Haile Selassie I—*Ras Tafari*, an imperial title used by Ethiopian emperors—as divine. Rastas often argue that every true black person is “Rasta,” a category that suggests unity and connectedness to Africa rather than cultic or religious affiliation. Seretha Rycenssa of Jamaica defined a “true Rasta” as one who “believes in the deity of the Ethiopian monarch . . . , sees black liberationist Marcus Mosiah Garvey as his prophet . . . , sticks to [his] path, does not shave, cut or straighten the hair, rejects the customs of ‘Babylon’ society,” and “looks on his blackness and sees that it is good and struggles to preserve it.”⁶ Not included among these, of course, are persons whom Rex Nettleford calls “designer dreads”—middle-class youths and yuppies who adopt the dreadlocks hairstyle, carry a “ragamuffin” appearance, and listen to reggae music but have no commitment to the teachings of Rastafari.⁷ Nor do the brethren (Rastafarians) regard as true Rastas persons they call “wolves in sheep’s clothing” or “rascals” and “impostors”—unsavory characters who hide behind “the locks” (dreadlocks) and “Rasta looks” (Rasta appearance) in order to commit

crime and smoke marijuana. Rastas or Rastafarians are, therefore, followers of Ras Tafari or persons who believe in the Rastafari ideology.

Notwithstanding these simple explanations, Rastafari defies traditional ways of conceiving, being, and knowing. As a result, many researchers and media persons have been unsuccessful in their attempts to pigeonhole the movement into preconceived, stereotypical categories, such as "religious cult"; "escapist movement"; "reactionary, anachronistic, eccentric Judeo-Christian heresy"; "apocalyptic Christian movement"; "messianic millennial cult"; "African-Caribbean religious myth"; and "West Indian Mafia" in England—or, as Claudia Rogers recorded with approbation, "religious fanatics," a "nuisance [and] an embarrassment to the Jamaican people, or [even] treacherous criminals who should be jailed or hung for their traitorous acts against Jamaican society."⁸ The hit movie *Marked for Death*, regarded in Jamaica and among Jamaican Americans as anti-Jamaican and anti-Rastafari, "identifies Rasta characters as a brutal segment of the Jamaican 'posse' and links Rastafarians with obeahism." Hollywood has thus "further embedded the stereotype in the American psyche."⁹

To make the task of defining the movement more challenging, a few Rastas have also spoken about Rastafari as though it is a reform movement within Christianity. Rastafarian *sistren* (the term is always used in the plural) Imani Nyah says, "We are African-centered Christians who proclaim that Ethiopia is Judah, and that Christ was manifested in the person of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie."¹⁰ In a letter to the Jamaica *Sunday Herald*, another sistren and political activist, Barbara Blake-Hannah, noted quite correctly that "members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church are Christians" and that "the Church proudly claims to be a strong and founding member of denominational Christianity." But then she added, "Among them are many persons who have come to see Christ through Rastafari. Indeed, the words *Ras (Tafari)* mean head = Christ, and, therefore, any man who claims that he is a Ras, must identify himself with Christ," for "Haile Selassie means: Power of the Trinity, which Trinity is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."¹¹ Responding to an article by Alex Walker titled "The Other Side of Rasta History," which appeared in the lead section of an earlier issue of the *Sunday Herald*, Blake-Hannah refuted Walker's claim that Rastas are not Christians and that "the most they can hope for is to be able to function within the communion of Christianity." She rebutted, "That is precisely what Rastafari do, who are members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. . . . The dreadlocks of the Rastafarian who feels himself/herself drawing close to God through the Christ within [them], is a direct link through the unknown of time, to this Ethiopian Orthodox Church priestly habit."¹²

While the Rastafarian ideology contains elements of some of the above characterizations, they are all limiting stereotypes—and in many cases, uninformed misrepresentations—that do not grasp the movement's definitive character and ethos. For example, Rastafarians, whose theology is rooted in Judeo-Christian scriptures, have a very strong millennialist orientation; they believe in the possibility of social, political, and religious reform. As Claudia Rogers says, the movement can be considered "millennial in the sense that brethren constantly refer to a hoped for period of peace, joy and justice." That is, "typical of other groupings . . . which stress the dream of the millennium, Rasta-

farians stress positive change" in a variety of tenets.¹³ The belief in an imminent, this-worldly, total salvation wherein the white world and its oppressive political institutions will fall, after which Blacks will reign in the new millennium, is only one of those tenets. To limit the still-evolving Afro-Caribbean phenomenon only to Christian ideas of an apocalyptic end of the world is, therefore, nearsighted and misinformed.

There is no denying that Rastafari is a legitimate religion for legal purposes (with regard to religious freedom), as recognized in Jamaica, Great Britain, the United States, and other countries. Recently, three federal appellate judges of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in San Francisco reversed a marijuana possession conviction of Rastafarian Cameron Best of Billings, Montana, "citing violations of the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA)." More specifically, the judges argued that "Best's use of marijuana as a Rastafarian sacrament was largely and wrongly proscribed by the lower court as an element in his defense." The ruling may imply that as soon as Rastas prove that their marijuana use is part of their religious sacrament, they may not be guilty of criminal activity. But it also establishes that the U.S. government is following an earlier action by the British government—after Rastafarian clashes with the British "Bulldogs" in 1977 in Handsworth, Birmingham, which led ultimately to the Brixton riot of 1981—in recognizing and protecting the religious liberty of Rastafarians.¹⁴

In spite of Rastafari's religious character and the attempt to make it a reform Christian movement, it is neither a Christian nor an African traditional religion; it is a *tertium quid*, a different kind or religious species among New World (if not New Age)¹⁵ or nontraditional religions, one that is distinctly Caribbean.¹⁶ Like its antecedents within the African diaspora—such as Voodoo (*Voudou*) in Haiti and New Orleans; Santería in Cuba; Yoruba, Kaballah, and Orisha in Trinidad and Tobago; Shango in Grenada; and Candomblé in Brazil—Rastafari is a modern Afro-Caribbean cultural phenomenon that combines concepts from African culture and the "Caribbean experience" (social, historical, religious and economic realities) with Judeo-Christian thought into a new sociopolitical and religious worldview. So while Rastafarian beliefs and practices are influenced by such Africanisms in Jamaican culture as Myalism, convince cult, revivalism (Zion), Bedwardism, Pocomania,¹⁷ and Burru (all Afro-Jamaican religious and cultural traditions), Rastafari's rise and ethos are driven by social, economic, and political forces in the region.

In this regard, Rastafari is more than a religion. It is a cultural movement, "a system of beliefs and a state of consciousness,"¹⁸ that advances a view of economic survival and political organization and structure that challenges the dominant cultural political "narrative" (ideology) in the "politics of Babylon." According to Carole Yawney, Rastafari is "a constellation of ambiguous symbols which today has the power to focalize and even mediate certain socio-cultural tensions that have developed on a global scale."¹⁹

Rastas regard themselves as members of a legitimate religious movement and a cultural revolution for world peace, racial harmony, and social, economic, and political reform. Two of the Rastas' stated policies of the 1960s were: "To promote educational progress of the African continent, its languages, culture and history," and "To recog-

nize the hurt suffered by the Continent of Africa through colonialism and to devote time and energy towards the development of Africa by all possible contributions."²⁰ As Se-maj noted, the Rastafarians shared other concerns:

All the brethren wanted local recognition and freedom of movement and speech, which are essential human rights. All wanted an end of persecution by government and police. Some brethren wanted improved material, social and economic conditions until repatriation. Some brethren wanted educational provisions, including adult education and technical training, and employment. Some brethren suggested that a special fund be established. Others asked for a radio program to tell Jamaica about their doctrine, and some asked for press facilities.²¹

Essentially, the Rastafarians are "Africanists" who are engaged in consciousness-raising with regard to African heritage, black religion, black pride, and being in the world. This African-centered ideology is a form of "conscientizing" that draws attention to the distortions of African history in the various forms of literature, which tend to obscure the continent's contribution to the origin of Western civilization. Long before the term *Afrocentricity* came into popular use in the United States, Jamaican Rastafarians had embraced the concept as the most important recipe for naming their reality and reclaiming their black heritage in the African diaspora. Rastas reserve the right to think, know, name, reinterpret, and define their "essence and existence" in nontraditional categories. Their consciousness of who they are determines their "Being" relative to naming and being in the world. (That is, one defines and authenticates one's existence as a matter of primary concern and then names oneself and one's world in relation to that mode of consciousness.)

What Do Rastas Believe?

Prior to the mid-1970s, Rasta believers supported the following major themes and doctrinal tenets: belief in the beauty of black people's African heritage; belief that Ras Tafari Haile Selassie I, emperor of Ethiopia, is the living God and black Messiah; belief in repatriation to Ethiopia, qua Africa, the true home and redemption of black people, as "having been foretold and . . . soon to occur"; the view that "the ways of the white men are evil, especially for the black" race; belief in "the apocalyptic fall of Jamaica as Babylon, the corrupt world of the white man," and that "once the white man's world crumbles, the current master/slave pattern [of existence] will be reversed."²² Jah Ras Tafari will overthrow or destroy the present order, and Rastafarians and other Blacks will be the benefactors of that destruction; they will reign with Jah in the new kingdom.

In 1973, Joseph Owens published a concise, ten-point summary of Rastafarian theology, which the Guyanese clergyman Michael N. Jagessar rehashed in 1991. These theological themes are: "the humanity of God and, correspondingly, the divinity of man"—that God's divinity is revealed through the humanity of the God-man Haile Selassie I, "God is man and man is God"; "God is to be found in every man," but "there must be one man in whom he exists most eminently and completely, and that is the

supreme man, Rastafari, Selassie I"; the "historicality of the experience of God's workings"—that historical facts must be seen in the light of the judgment and workings of God; the "terrestriality of salvation"—that salvation is earthly; the "supremacy of life"—that human beings are called to celebrate and protect life; the "efficacy of the word"—that the spoken word as a manifestation of the divine presence and power can create and bring destruction; "the corporate dimension of evil"—that sin is both personal and corporate, so that "corporations and economic powers like the International Monetary Fund" must be held responsible for Jamaica's fiscal problems; the "imminence of judgment"; the "sacramentality of nature"—that human beings are called to protect the environment by conserving energy, reducing pollution, and eating natural foods; and "the priesthood of Rastas"—that the brethren are the chosen people of Jah to manifest God's power and promote peace in the world.²³

While Rastafarians, by their very nature, are not a homogeneous group, true believers subscribe to the most important Rasta doctrine, that Haile Selassie I is the living God. Many Rastas still regard Haile Selassie as Christ, the black Messiah whose promised return or "second coming" the emperor fulfills; Selassie is seen as a living descendant of King Solomon and the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, and Elect of God. But since the "disappearance"²⁴ (according to Rastas) of Selassie and the popular acceptance of Rastafarian culture in Jamaica in the mid-1970s, Rastafari has shown modest change in some of its theological and ideological concepts. For example, brethren have reinterpreted the doctrine of repatriation as voluntary migration to Africa, returning to Africa culturally and symbolically, or rejecting Western values and preserving African roots and black pride. The idea that "the white man is evil" has also become less prominent in later Rastafarian thought, and the concept of Babylon has broadened to include all oppressive and corrupt systems of the world.

Under the influence of some articulate sistren, since the early 1980s many brethren and Rasta camps have had to reevaluate their patriarchal view of sexuality. Rastafari sistren are becoming more vocal and active in the movement, especially in the Twelve Tribes of Israel (one of the recent influential groups in Rastafari), than they were before 1980. Rastas have also shown a greater social and political involvement in Jamaican society than they did before the Michael Manley (former prime minister of Jamaica) era of the 1970s. Some developments no doubt were influenced by change in the public perception of and attitude toward Rastafari, the "disappearance" of Selassie, the international acceptance of Rastafari via Bob Marley and reggae, and the improved social and economic status of some of the believers.

Why the International Surge of Rastafari?

Several incidents occurred in the first twenty years of the movement that gave Rastafari national publicity. In 1930 the would-be founders of Rastafari capitalized on the publicity surrounding the coronation of Ras Tafari as emperor of Ethiopia, broadcast on

the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and national and international television networks. By building its fundamental doctrines around Ethiopianism and the coronation of Ras Tafari Makonnen (Haile Selassie I), Rastafari attracted the attention of many critics throughout Jamaica and Ethiopia. At first the Jamaican public brushed aside as a Christian heresy the theological claims Rastas made about Selassie and saw the idea of repatriation as wishful thinking among the uneducated. But when Leonard Howell and his followers began having encounters with law-enforcement officials in 1933—especially when Howell sold five thousand postcards of Selassie as passports to Ethiopia—the *Daily Gleaner*, the *Sunday Guardian*, Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation (JBC), and other media frequently covered Rastafari in the daily news.

When the Italians invaded Ethiopia in 1936, Blacks in Jamaica, the United States, Britain, and Africa protested against Benito Mussolini's imperialism and raised funds to support the underground resistance fighters. The Jamaican Rastafarians even appealed to the British government to rescind a law that prevented Jamaicans from joining the Ethiopian army to repel the invaders from the "promised land." So strong was the pro-Selassie sentiment among Blacks in the West that it resulted in the Ethiopian World Federation (EWF) organizing chapters in Harlem, New York, in 1937 and in Detroit, Michigan, and Kingston, Jamaica, in 1938. The Rastafarians who were closely associated with the EWF became known for their uncompromising chant against the Italian Babylon in the Ethiopian political struggle. When Selassie successfully drove the Italians out of Ethiopia in 1941,²⁵ the media publicized the Rastafarians' celebration of the event. That same year Rastas got added attention when the police raided Howell's commune at Pinnacle Hill and arrested many of his followers on charges of marijuana growing and violence.²⁶ Again, the negative publicity from the media gave the Rastafarians added exposure as they gained strength among Jamaica's dispossessed.

According to Leonard Barrett, at least five significant events brought the Rastafarian movement into national and international prominence during the 1950s and early 1960s: the EWF's increased activity in Jamaica in 1953; the Rastafarians' 1958 convention; Rasta-leader national emergencies in 1959 and 1960; the University of the West Indies' interest in the movement in 1960; and Jamaican delegations to African countries in 1961 and 1962.²⁷ In 1955 the media brought the Rastafarians into the international spotlight when a delegation from the EWF in Harlem told some Jamaicans that Selassie was building ships that would sail to American and Jamaican ports in order to transport Rastas to Ethiopia, and that His Majesty had decided to set aside a large acreage of land for repatriated black people from the West. In spite of the quixotic nature of the rumor, the enormous cost of transport, and the many obstacles to migrating to Africa, the call "created an atmosphere of great excitement and expectancy"²⁸ among many who wanted immediate repatriation. In 1956 hundreds of Jamaicans "were seen at the port in Kingston awaiting the arrival of a ship which would transport them to Ethiopia," and "in 1959, thousands of black Jamaicans, following the Rastafarians, sold all they had to obtain a ticket for a passage to Ethiopia from Claudius Henry."²⁹ The press found these events highly amusing and gave the Rastafarians more publicity than they could have given themselves.

The Rastafarians gained new strength and exposed many aspects of the movement to the public when they attempted to organize their various factions into a united body in 1958. Emboldened by the publicity from the convention and their sense of solidarity and strength, three-hundred bearded Rastas gathered at Victoria Park in Kingston in March 1958 and announced a takeover of Jamaica. Three months later, several Rastas and their families daringly occupied Old King's House, the governor's house, in the name of Negus Negusta.³⁰ The shedding of Rastafari's benign persona in the sudden appearance of a military front exacerbated the tension and clashes between law enforcement and the Rastas. In 1959, when the police raided Claudius Henry's headquarters and found "2,500 electrical detonators, 1,300 detonators, a shotgun, a caliber .32 revolver, a large quantity of machetes sharpened [on] both sides like swords and laced in sheaths, cartridges, several sticks of dynamite, and other articles,"³¹ Rastas were condemned nationally in the Jamaican media. After Henry was convicted of treason and given a six-year prison sentence, his son, Ronald, collaborated with some hard-core Rastas who had military training and mounted an attack against the government of Premier Norman Manley. The rebellion had to be repelled by more than one thousand men, including soldiers from the British regiment stationed in the region and Jamaican police, aircraft, and mortar and rocket crews.³² The BBC, the *Times*, national television, and other media reported these incidents, and Rastafari became internationally infamous.

The Claudius and Ronald Henry incidents startled many Jamaicans and the academy, which "called for an in-depth inquiry into the beliefs, aims, and aspirations of the movement."³³ The 1960 University College of the West Indies (now UWI) study found that, since the 1940s, the Rastafarians had become popular among large numbers of the disfranchised, poor, unemployed, hopeless, and belligerent youths of the Jamaican underclass—persons who felt they were left behind by the colonial government and its supposed progress toward Jamaican nationalism and independence. The strange image of unkempt clothes and dreadlocks (or natty dreads), "the phenomenon of rudeboy," and the spirit of militant protest³⁴ made Rastafari rather appealing to the dispossessed. Finally, in 1960, Premier Norman Manley's government took a sympathetic posture toward the Rastafarian cause on the question of repatriation to African countries. Although in 1962, when the Jamaican government changed hands, the repatriation program was shelved,³⁵ public curiosity and the new understanding that the 1960 UWI study engendered were contributing to the growing popularity of the Rastafarians among the youth. Even the mass arrests of Rastas in 1963 as a result of the Coral Gardens incident in Montego Bay, in which Rasta leader Claudius Henry was again charged with treason (see Chapter 2 by Clinton Hulton and Nathaniel Samuel Murrell and Chapter 3 by Barry Chevannes), did not dissuade inquirers from becoming Rastas or sympathizing with their cause.

The visit of Emperor Haile Selassie to Kingston in 1966 gave the Rastafarians unprecedented publicity and created a sustained national and international interest in the movement. Jamaicans greeted the royal personage with such enthusiasm that devotion to Ethiopia, qua Africa, and to Selassie rivaled, and appeared to threaten, the rising Jamaican nationalism and patriotism. According to Rex Nettleford, such strong feelings

were engendered toward Africa that "one month after the Royal visit, a member of the Jamaican Senate gave notice of a Motion that the Jamaican Constitution be amended to make the Emperor of Ethiopia, H.I.M. Haile Selassie, the king of Jamaica in place of the Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom."³⁶ This catapulted the Rastafari movement into the spotlight and allowed its medals to shine in the light of international publicity.³⁷

When Michael Manley's People's National Party (PNP) came to power in 1972, the Rastafari again received support and strong political endorsement from both the new prime minister of Jamaica (1972-1980) and his party. The flamboyant and charismatic British-educated mulatto spared no effort to portray himself as antiestablishment, pro-black, grassroots, or a "roots man" of the suffering Jamaican masses. During the election, Manley used the Rastafarian flag, colors, slogans, signs, and music and quoted the Dreads in his public speeches to win votes. (It is also believed that Rastas helped Manley win a resounding second-term victory at the polls in 1976.)³⁸ Sometime after the 1972 election, Manley visited a "dunghill" (a Rasta commune) to solicit the help of Rasta leaders in the government's attempt to deal with the problem of youth violence. Manley's government gave such prestige to the Rastafarian movement that dreadlocks became the "in thing" in Jamaica in the 1970s.³⁹ From the early 1970s, the Rasta persona ceased to be the exclusive domain of the underclass and became, instead, a fashion trend among the youths of the Caribbean middle class and Blacks in Britain, Canada, and the United States.

The Rastafarian movement gained such strength and popularity that the "disappearance" of Haile Selassie I in 1975 only strengthened the element of mythmaking and mystery in its religious cultus and contributed to its broader circulation in the Caribbean media. According to Leonard Barrett, "The large number of representatives from the Eastern Caribbean at the Rastafari Theocratic Assembly (held at the U.W.I., Mona, Jamaica, July 18-25, 1983) was solid evidence that the Rasta movement is now a force throughout the region." Barrett said then, "Rastas from the Eastern Caribbean are a new phenomenon, and they are having serious confrontations with their governments and police." But we should not forget that "several of these movements were established after the death of Haile Selassie," and that "most of those attending the assembly were young, articulate, and revolutionary. . . . There were representatives from Grenada, Dominica, St. Lucia, Guyana, St. Kitts, St. Eustatius, the Grenadines, Barbados, [and] Trinidad and Tobago."⁴⁰

As scholars in this book and elsewhere have demonstrated so accurately, reggae music has been the most powerful force behind the international spread and popularity of Rasta culture. This need not be discussed here—except to mention that in 1978, Nettelford said, "The music has gone beyond fulfilling the universal need for entertainment to attract acute interest in its deep significance for Jamaican and Caribbean cultural search for form and purpose."⁴¹ In many ways, to feel the reggae beat is to think Rasta, as well as to celebrate the life and work of Bob Marley, who made reggae music and Rastafari so internationally accessible. Youths from different parts of the world who understand very little, if any, of Rastafarian culture celebrate its reggae "ridims."

A final reason for the popularity of and international interest in Rastafari—and one that is at the heart of this collaborative work—is that since the mid-1950s, a significant

number of scholars from many different countries have increasingly shown interest in this grassroots religious and cultural phenomenon. Although Frank Jan van Dijk is correct in noting, in this anthology and elsewhere, that research on the international dimensions of Rastafari—especially in Europe and the Pacific—is still in its infancy, the literature on the movement in the Americas is most impressive. By November 1996, I had found over 150 substantive publications (books and articles), many unpublished essays read at national and international conferences, and dozens of theses and dissertations on this fascinating movement. Also, there are literally scores of brief commentaries, newspaper editorials, columns, and Web sites on this phenomenon. Important publications are also found in obscure and, sometimes, uncertified sources, several magazines (e.g., *The Beat* and *Reggae Report*), and university and seminary archives; they provide invaluable information to researchers studying Rastafari.

What Is This Book About?

"Come we go chant down Babylon one more time," sang the charismatic Rastafarian reggae musical statesperson Bob Marley in "Chant Down Babylon," a song included on his *Confrontation* album, issued two years after his death.⁴² The title of this volume, *Chanting Down Babylon*, did not originate with Marley but is an old Rasta catchword that has come down from the earliest Rasta camps and permeates reggae. It is reflected in such traditional Rasta music as "Rasta Man Chant," recorded by Count Ossie and the Mystic Revelation of Rastafari and popularized by the Wailers. The phrase is echoed in Bunny Wailer's "Ready When You Ready," in which he invites listeners to chant Babylon down in a "rhythm." The Wailers' protégé Freddie MacGregor also fields his own version of "Chant Down Babylon," and Judy Mowatt adapts it as "Sisters' Chant" while Lincoln "Sugar" Minott urges listeners to "Chant Them Down." The list goes on. The title *Chanting Down Babylon* was also given respectability in the academy when Carolyn Cooper published her often-cited essay "Chanting Down Babylon: Bob Marley's Song as Literary Text" in 1986.

How does a marginalized liberation movement from a "little rock"—as the band Third World identified Jamaica in its song "Reggae Ambassador"—beat down Babylon's racism, cultural prejudice, and economic disfranchisement? The Rastas do it by showing political dissonance and cultural resistance; developing a psychology of Blackness and somebodiness; exorcising the demons of racism; rejecting bigotry, classism, and stereotypical ways of being and knowing that are partially encoded in Jamaican folklore; attacking social problems with the creation of a "big, big music," an art that is irresistible and coded with situation-changing messages;⁴³ and holding onto a messianic hope for the future. Throughout this *Rastafari Reader*, the Rasta mission in society is seen as one of deconstruction and reconstruction, of infusing and thereby replacing society's destructive, negative vibrations with positive ones, and of undermining and altering evil with good.

This book brings together an array of material from the leading scholars in Rastafarian research, whose training is in various fields of the humanities and who cross national

boundaries as well as race and gender lines. The book has drawn from both unpublished and published material most of which has not been available to the public, as well as from exclusive interviews and conversations with leading Rastas. *Chanting Down Babylon* therefore provides a full grasp of the Rastafarian ethos: the movement's founding; evolution; successes and failures; belief system; cultic practices; philosophical, psychological, social, and cultural underpinnings; and impact on the society at large.

Part I treats key ideological concepts of the movement to chant down Babylon and the historical, social, and cultural context within which Rastafari arose. Here we show the Rastafarian reasoning, the categories and methodology employed in an attempt to free the African soul in the diaspora from the legacy of colonialism. Sociologist Ennis Edmonds's chapter, "Dread 'T In-a-Babylon: Ideological Resistance and Cultural Revitalization," provides a concise and easy-to-grasp study of the nature, meaning, and function of the Rastafarian ideology and its mission to chant down Babylon's "economic rapacity, mental slavery, and political trickery." This "Rasta-friendly" interpretation of the Rasta argot and key ideas and concepts sets the tone for the reader-friendly but scholarly nature of the book.

In "Rastas' Psychology of Blackness, Resistance, and Somebodiness," Caribbean scholar Clinton Hutton and Nathaniel Samuel Murrell identify the psychological concepts that enabled Blacks to survive a legacy of oppression in Babylon and that now undergird the Rastafarian ideology. Hutton and Murrell trace the development of the Rasta psychology of resistance, liberation, and redemption through Ethiopianist, Garveyite, and Afro-Caribbean sources. They contend that Rastafarian psychology is Afrocentric and came to birth, over a long period of time, in an oppressive environment in the diaspora that made a black psychology absolutely necessary for the survival of people of African ancestry. This is probably the first publication of its kind on the psychology of Blackness in the Caribbean.

For more than twenty years Barry Chevannes has researched, taught, and written about Rastafari. As Rex Nettleford notes in his chapter, the now leading Caribbean sociologist and premier authority on the Rastafarian phenomenon has published the most definitive work on Rastafarian ethnography to date. Chevannes's engaging "Rastafari and the Exorcism of the Ideology of Racism and Classism in Jamaica" is an invaluable addition to this book. Chevannes analyzes the social, cultural, and political context in which the Rastafarian ideology arose and the impact of the movement on racism in Jamaican culture. He argues that, through its criticism of and cultural resistance to domination and oppression in its myriad forms, Rastafari was very effective in raising racial consciousness, exorcising the demons of creole racism, and forging social and political change in Jamaica during the second half of this century.

The editors of this book are sensitive not only to the issue of gender but also "the insider/outsider controversy" in Rastafarian research and have been careful to listen to voices from within the movement, across gender lines. In addition to the many citations and references to Rastafarian writers in this volume, we are fortunate to present two chapters by the leading Rastafarian "sistren" (sisters) in Jamaica, as well as an interview-essay done by a self-styled Rastafarian, Eleanor Wint, professor at the University of the West Indies, with "brethren."

Maureen Rowe's "Gender and Family Relations in Rastafari: A Personal Perspective" and Imani M. Tafari-Ama's "Rastawoman as Rebel: Case Studies in Jamaica" reflect a growing body of literature on and by women in their attempt to deal with the ideology of patriarchy in Rastafari while collaborating with the brethren in the chant to pull down Babylon. Rowe's beautifully written personal experiences from within the movement and her very articulate and accessible interpretation and analysis of gender issues in Rastafari and the wider Jamaican society, the "rudeboy" phenomenon, the rise of the women's movement in the Caribbean in the 1970s, the impact of women on the Rastafarian movement and new trends among the sistren in the 1990s are unrivaled. Tafari-Ama is another practicing Rastafarian who breaks the unofficial code in Rastafari and "tells it like it is" in the voices of several anonymous informants. With insightful and nuanced critiques and analyses of Rasta ideology, Tafari-Ama exposes several taboo subjects within Rasta patriarchy. She dares to expose the shifting scales of power between brethren and sistren, less-than-savory survival strategies in Rasta families, and issues of sexuality, domestic violence, and classism in Rastafari, which the brethren rarely admit. These two chapters provide a gold mine of ethnographic materials.

Is it appropriate to use hegemonic Western (European) philosophical categories to analyze an anti-European/anti-Western social-cultural movement? Philosopher Adrian Anthony McFarlane, the brother of a practicing Rasta, says yes. McFarlane's "The Epistemological Significance of 'I-an-I' as a Response to Quashie and Anancyism in Jamaican Culture" gives a perceptive analysis of the Rastafarian "I-an-I" locution (Rasta "I" words) in Jamaican speech and demonstrates that one can use European and Greek philosophical categories to analyze issues related to a popular cultural movement in the Caribbean without allowing those categories to determine or control the discourse on Rasta reality. McFarlane provides an insight into Rastafarian philosophy via an epistemological analysis of the attitudinal chant against folklorist Anancy and Quashie stereotypes in the Jamaican culture of Babylon and their attendant biases and challenges to Rastas.

In Part II, Neil J. Savishinsky, Rupert Lewis, and Clinton Chisholm explore vital links between Rastafari, African traditions, Garveyism, and Ethiopia, while Frank Jan van Dijk and Randal L. Hepner take the reader on a tour of the internationalization of Rastafari. "African Dimensions of the Jamaican Rastafarian Movement" is the result of informed ethnographic research in several West African countries by the American sociologist Savishinsky, who has also done substantial work among the Jamaican Rastafarians and whose publications on Rastafari are well known in the field. One is often struck by the family resemblance between the cultural concepts and lexicography in Voodoo, Rastafari, Orisha, and Santeria, on the one hand, and those on the African continent, on the other hand. Savishinsky has found several direct African continuities in the Jamaican Rastafarian chant against Babylon, which demonstrates a vital connection to African cultural traditions that hitherto has not been articulated clearly and accurately.

The extent to which Garveyism influenced Rastafari is the main focus of "Marcus Garvey and the Early Rastafarians: Continuity and Discontinuity." Rupert Lewis, a Marcus Garvey scholar and Jamaican political scientist who also has published several

works on the Rastafarians, provides a provocative analysis of the similarities and the not-so-obvious differences between Garveyism and the Rastafarian ideology. Contrary to popular opinion, Lewis argues that the early Rastafarians were not Garveyites and that Marcus Garvey did not embrace the Rastafarian ideology. Yet he admits that Garvey's philosophy had an unmistakable influence on early Rastafarian thought, and that his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) shares an important part of the historical and cultural genre in which Rastafari arose.

In the English-speaking Caribbean, the Reverend Clinton Chisholm is recognized as the most active and articulate Jamaican apologist in the Rastafarian-Christian dialogue. The British Caribbean-educated clergyman and freelance public speaker conducts workshops throughout the region on Caribbean cultural traditions and Christian thought, in which he applies rigorous critical thinking to the theological debate on Rastafarian and Christian "truth claims." Chisholm's "The Rasta-Sclassic Ethiopian Connections," which challenges certain perceptions of the Ethiopian emperor in Rastafarian thought and other issues related to doctrinal beliefs, provides a necessary critical perspective on Rastafari that readers, especially non-Rastas, may find instructive. Chisholm raises critical questions about fundamental beliefs in Rastafari that give a healthy balance to our *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader*.

The Dutch anthropologist Frank Jan van Dijk, who has published a most impressive dissertation on Jamaican Rastafarians, carefully documents the development and spread of the movement in three major corners of the world through the influence of Bob Marley and reggae. In "Chanting Down Babylon Outernational: The Rise of Rastafari in Europe, the Caribbean, and the Pacific," van Dijk argues that even in France, Germany, Portugal, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Australia, and countries in the Far East, where the Rastafari ideology, chant, symbolism, and lifestyle are hardly understood by the fans, white youths fall "head over heels" for the reggae "ridims" and the unorthodox hairstyle and dress. Through immigrants from Suriname and Britain, the Rasta-reggae culture has developed deep roots in the Netherlands and other European countries, either as a lifestyle or as a religion.⁴⁴ Van Dijk also provides intriguing historical accounts of the Rastafarian experience in the Caribbean and Britain, where the chant against oppression and marginalization met with vicious and brutal responses from the "Babylon governments."

Since the 1960s, the Rastafarians have formed an important segment of the very large Jamaican population in the United States and are now found in even larger numbers in metropolitan areas. U.S.-born, White Dreadlocks sympathizer Randal Hepner bemoans the fact that, in spite of this growing presence of Rastafarians in the United States, no substantive study hitherto has been done on the movement. Hepner's "Chanting Down Babylon in the Belly of the Beast: The Rastafari Movement in the Metropolitan United States" therefore is essential for studying the internationalization of Rastafari. It provides the first substantive exposure of Americans' perceptions of Rastas; Rastas' encounters with U.S. law-enforcement officials; the movement's organizational structure, practices, and ethos north of Jamaica; and where and how Rastas survive in a less-than-friendly environment.

George Eaton Simpson, professor emeritus at Oberlin College, was the first scholar to conduct serious field research on Rastafari in Jamaica. His chapter "Personal Reflections on Rastafari in West Kingston in the Early 1950s" is therefore an essential contribution to this *Rastafari Reader*. Simpson's eyewitness accounts of activities among the Rastafarians in Trench Town and anecdotes of his experiences corroborate the stories and events retold throughout the book. Another important contribution of this chapter is Simpson's disarming observation that many contemporary Rasta practices, concepts, and phrases—even use of the term *Nyabingi*—were either not popular among the Rastafari or nonexistent in the early 1950s.

In the spirit of the enigmatic Junior Byles and Delroy Wilson, who call on Rastas to "Chant Down Babylon" and "Beat Down Babylon," Part III examines the Rastafarian mission through the arts to see how Rasta music, art, craft, and film have attempted to hit repressive society with painless change. It provides glimpses of Rastas in the arts so that readers can anticipate the movement's place in the future, as it seeks to follow what it sees as its divine calling: to chant down Babylon's negativity with a positive vibration. Verena Reckord's most informative chapter, "From Burru Drums to Reggae Rhythms: The Evolution of Rasta Music," traces the evolution of Rasta music from Burru drums to ska, rock steady, and reggae "rhythms." The experienced Jamaican ethnomusicologist notes that early Rastafari had no music of its own, before Count Ossie encountered the Burru people at "Back-o-Wall" in Kingston. But once the brethren learnt the rhythms, it was only a matter of time before they hijacked them and made the Burru drums the most important Rasta musical symbol and the heartbeat of reggae for chanting down Babylon worldwide.

This book would not have been complete without a chapter on Mr. Rasta Reggae himself, Bob Marley, who was largely responsible for popularizing Rastafari. We are therefore delighted that leading reggae critic Roger Steffens, the man known as "the honorary member of the Marley family," has written a fine chapter, "Bob Marley: Rasta Warrior," focusing on the "King of Reggae." Digging deep into his vast resources, Steffens shares never-before-published material on this reggae giant and Third World superstar, shedding new light on Marley's mission, context, and self-perception and the growing appreciation of persons who were close to him and those from around the world who cannot get enough of Marley's records.

Most books available on reggae deal primarily with its origins and developments in Jamaica and are usually sketchy on its international impact; they are understandably silent on the place and function of the rest of the Rasta contribution in art. But in this book, William David Spencer expands the existing picture of Rasta in the arts, gathering up primary and secondary source material to trace reggae's global impact while sampling the achievements of Rasta artists in other art forms. Spencer shows that at the same time that Rastas are attempting to destroy Babylon by chanting it down, they also recommend a positive function for the word, sound, power of song; for Rastas' beautiful expressions are more than simple declarations of protest and pride in the form of cultural one-upmanship. His chapter, "Chanting Change around the World through Rasta Rhythm and Art," demonstrates that Rastas' chants are also proclamations of

beauty, assurances of divine love and justice, and encouragement for self-reliance in the face of the reality of dwelling within Babylon's repressive structures. The Rasta aesthetic is both a response to oppression and a call to freedom incarnated in art. Thus, while Great Britain's Steel Pulse, for example, orders "Chant a Psalm" to combat society's cold disregard, Judy Mowatt urges "Get Up Chant (to the God of creation)," John Holt extols the positive power of "Chanting," and the Twinkle Brothers celebrate "Babylon Falling" with their *Chant Rastafari*.⁴⁵

If technological society has moved from the oral to the written, it is now moving, in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries to the postliterary—the visual. As Rasta images from a still largely oral Caribbean context are appropriated by the more technological European-American culture, how are they envisioned? Kevin Aylmer, longtime cultural critic, Marcus Garvey expert, reggae concert promoter, and friend and supporter to numerous Rasta artistic enterprises, tackles the Rasta sojourn in Hollywood through an analysis of eight well-known movies. Some questions that Aylmer's chapter, "Towering Babble and Glimpses of Zion: Recent Depictions of Rastafari in Cinema," addresses are: How have the images of Rasta been appropriated and transformed in film? What images have the films made in the Caribbean and in the United States apprehended, interpreted, and then presented to viewers? The Rastafarian voice in audible and visual art, like all voices, will increase as the place of art in our increasingly technological, visual, global culture expands.

Part IV of the *Reader* provides answers to important questions related to the religious beliefs or theology and to the cultic or ritual practices of Rastafari long recognized as central to the movement. But this section also provides a context in which to engage a critical evaluation of the "Christian apologetic" on Jamaican Rastafari. We are delighted to open the critical discussion with the chapter "Discourse on Rastafarian Reality" from the deputy vice-chancellor of the University of the West Indies, the Honorable Rex Nettleford, himself a veteran in the field of Rasta research since 1960 and the "Academic Dean" of the study of Caribbean culture. Nettleford underscores that research and scholarship on the Rastafarian phenomenon in the academy are imperative for better understanding and appreciating the movement. He provides the most current assessment of the discourse, namely, the demarginalization and unfettering of "Rastology" from the hegemonic, Babylon paradigms and methodologies of North Atlantic Eurocentric theology and cultural traditions. In a very timely critique of misconceptions of the Rastafarian ethos in the media, popular culture, and religion, Nettleford defends the Rasta ideology as a legitimate cultural phenomenon in its own right and as entitled to its own system of values, categories, linguistic locutions, beliefs, and practices, in the manner of the classical religions of the world. Nettleford's analysis of the nature of biblical materials, Christian orthodoxy, and Rastas' use of the Bible puts the reader on notice that there are very different perceptions of the Rastafarians, both in the academy and in popular culture. Some of those differences are given a voice in this attempt to spread the knowledge of Rastafari and chant down Babylon in print.

In "The Black Biblical Hermeneutics of Rastafari," Nathaniel Samuel Murrell and Lewin Williams trace the twisted path to a Rastafarian hermeneutics as the movement

"hijacked" Judeo-Christian Scriptures and converted them into vehicles for identity, "ideation," and liberation. The chapter analyzes the use of biblical materials in a variety of Rastafarian discourses on issues related to the divinity of Haile Selassie and his alleged connection to the Hebrew king Solomon, as well as the black experience in the Bible. Ennis Edmonds's concise "Structure and Ethos of Rastafari" explains the informal organizational structure that characterizes the movement, its ritual activities—ganja smoking, "Nyabingi I-ssemblies," and "groundation"—which form the true ethos of Rastafari. Edmonds shows that in spite of its nonhomogeneous character and lack of formal structure, Rastafari is not a movement in total chaos but one that has its own peculiar levels of social organization in "houses," camps, and "yards"; and while it does not have a developed clerical system, its elders are well recognized for their leadership roles and abilities.

A treasured feature of Part IV, and of the *Reader* as a whole, is William David Spencer's extensive commentary on the fourteen-page *The Promised Key*, the earliest writing on Rastafari from Leonard Howell, one of the founders of Rastafari. As Spencer notes, this long-sought-after piece of ephemera and primary source material on early Rastafarian thought has previously been inaccessible to the reading public. We are delighted that we are able to make it available to our readers in the present format. Spencer's carefully arranged chapter takes readers through a variety of theological, religious, cultural, gender, and other issues addressed by Leonard Howell and provides one safe passage through the hermeneutical minefield of Judeo-Christian theological and ecclesiastical thought forms, founded on the Bible, as the Rasta preacher used (or misused) these to degrade women and chastise Christianity.

Nathaniel Samuel Murrell and Burchell Taylor's "Rastafari's Messianic Theology and Caribbean Theology of Liberation" brings closure to the discourse on Rastafarian reality in this volume. But the authors raise important theological and methodological questions, about Rastafari which could set the tone for future conversation on a Caribbean theology of liberation that wishes to enter into dialogue with Rastafari and other Afro-Caribbean religious traditions.

The book appropriately ends with a tribute to Leonard Barrett for the pioneering work he has done in Rastafarian research, his commitment to the study of African culture in the diaspora, and the inspiration he has given to all of us who attempt to carry on the mission of educating society at large about the culture and ethos of Rastafari and the Caribbean. We thank the students at Hartwick College for collaborating with Adrian Anthony McFarlane in making available the interview with Leonard Barrett in Appendix A. The contributors to this book were encouraged to document appropriate sources carefully in their notes and, by so doing, make a general bibliography unnecessary. As a substitute for the traditional bibliography, Nathaniel Samuel Murrell's concluding literature review in honor of Leonard Barrett, Appendix B, highlights the most significant works on the Rastafarian movement since the 1960s and the influence Barrett's works have had on younger scholars in this field of research.

Although this anthology gives a substantive treatment of the ethos, development, and mission of Rastafari internationally, the editors were unable to secure scholarly contri-

butions on the state of the movement among the large black populations in Canada, Central America, Venezuela, Brazil, and southern Africa, where, in some cases, the language and the literature proved problematic. It is our hope that this book will inspire further research on the fast-growing Rastafarian presence in these parts and in other regions not mentioned herein. May the *Reader* take Rastafarian research to a new level of academic inquiry and find a busy life in the United States, Canada, England, the Caribbean, and among the more than 100 million Blacks in South America and the 850 million Africans "in the motherland," and around the world.

Notes

1. Peter B. Clarke, *Black Paradise: The Rastafarian Movement in Jamaica and Britain* (Wellingborough, Northamptonshire: Aquarian Press, 1986), 11.

2. Before the 1960s, Christians largely ignored the movement or criticized it privately and occasionally in sermons. See Roger Ringenberg, "Rastafarianism: An Expanding Jamaican Cult" D. Min. thesis (Jamaica Theological Seminary, Kingston, 1978), 1.

3. Leahcim Tufani Semaj, "Inside Rasta: The Future of a Religious Movement," *Caribbean Review* 14, 1 (1986): 8. This is an incendiary Jamaican patois expression, meaning "Those damn Rastas, what do they really want by saying they want to go to Africa? We should drown them in the sea."

4. Kim Leighton, "Doper or Devotee? Smoking Out Rastafarianism," *Liberty: A Question of Compulsion* 91, 6 (November/December 1996): 8. Published by International Religious Liberty Association, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Springs, Maryland, 20904-6600.

5. Some Rastas reject the term *Rastafarianism*, used in the media and the academy, because to them, an "-ism" is a false movement or religion. It is not uncommon, however, to find even committed Rastafarian believers using the designation *Rastafarianism*.

6. Seretha Rycenssa, "The Rastafarian Legacy: A Rich Cultural Gift," *Economic Report of Jamaica* 4, 1 (1978): 22, 23.

7. See Rex Nettleford, "Discourse on Rastafarian Reality," Chapter 18 in this book.

8. See editorial by Michael N. Jagessar, "JPIC and Rastafarians," *One World* (February 1991): 1; Claudia Rogers, "What's A Rasta?" *Caribbean Review* 7, 1 (January-March 1978): 9; Ringenberg, "Rastafarianism," 1.

9. Charlene Robinson, "Marked for Death Said Giving Bad Impression of J'cans, Rastas," *Daily Gleaner*, November 3, 1990, 1; Leighton, "Doper or Devotee?" 8.

10. Quoted in Leighton, "Doper or Devotee?" 8.

11. Barbara Blake Hannah, "Misunderstanding Rastafari," *Sunday Herald*, April 4, 1993, 5A.

12. Ibid.

13. Rogers, "What's A Rasta?" 9.

14. Leighton, "Doper or Devotee?" 6. See also John Brown, *Shades of Grey: Police-West Indian Relations in Handsworth* (Birmingham, England: Cranfield Police Studies, 1977); Clarke, *Black Paradise*.

15. Anthropologist Carole D. Yawney of York University, Toronto, who has done ethnographic research on the Rastafarians since the 1960s, says, "Rastafari . . . represents a remarkable picture, not only for Caribbeanists, but also for students of *New Age religion*" ("Rasta Mek a Trod: Symbolic Ambiguity in a Globalizing Religion," in Thomas Bremer and Ulrich Fleisch-

mann, eds., *Alternative Cultures in the Caribbean*, report of the First International Conference of the Society of Caribbean Research, Berlin, 1988. [Berlin: Vervuert Verlag, 1993], 161; emphasis mine). On Rastafari as a New Age religion, see also Neil J. Savishinsky, "Rastafari in the Promised Land: The Spread of a Jamaican Socioreligious Movement among the Youth of West Africa," *African Studies Review* 37, 3 (December 1994): 35-39.

16. The attempt to classify Rastafarians as Christian and to judge them by Judeo-Christian standards and categories only adds to the growing number of misconceptions about the movement.

17. Scholars disagree on the extent to which Pocomania ("Poco") has influenced Rastas, but Nettleford is convinced that Poco must be included among the Afro-Caribbean antecedents of Rastafari.

18. See Barry Chevannes, "Rastafari: A New Approach," *New West Indian Guide* 64, 3 and 4 (1990): 136.

19. Yawney, "Rasta Meck a Trod," 161. In an earlier publication, Yawney argued that Rastafari "is a complex phenomenon which cannot be analyzed easily in terms of strictly traditional models of utopian or millenarian movements" ("Remnants of All Nations: Rastafarian Attitudes to Race and Nationality," in Frances Henry, *Ethnicity in the Americas* [Chicago: Morton Publishers, 1976], 232).

20. Ivor Morris, *Obeah, Christ and Rastaman: Jamaica and Its Religion* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1982), 79.

21. Semaj, "Inside Rasta," 8.

22. Rogers, "What's A Rasta?" 9; Semaj, "Inside Rasta," 8.

23. Joseph Owens, "The Rastafarians of Jamaica," in Idris Hamid, ed., *Troubling of the Waters* (San Fernando, Trinidad: Rahaman Printery, 1973), 167-70; Jagessar, "JPIC and Rastafarians," 15-17. See Chapter 22, "Rastafari's Messianic Ideology, and Caribbean Theology of Liberation," Nathaniel Samuel Murrell and Burchell K. Taylor, below, for a fuller treatment of these doctrinal themes.

24. Some Rastas say Selassie disappeared because, like Christ, his body was not found on the third day after his death.

25. As Rupert Lewis noted, the request to join the Ethiopian army was ridiculed by high-ranking officials in the British government. See Lewis's "Marcus Garvey and the Early Rastafarians," Chapter 8 in this book.

26. Sheila Kitzinger, "The Rastafarian Brethren of Jamaica," in Michael M. Horowitz, ed., *Peoples and Cultures* (New York: Natural History Press, 1971), 580.

27. Leonard Barrett, *Soul-Force: African Heritage in Afro-American Religion* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1974), 164.

28. Clarke, *Black Paradise*, 49.

29. *Ibid.*, 50. Henry was imprisoned for fraud in 1960.

30. *The (Kingston) Star*, 22 March 1958, 1; cited in Barrett, *Soul-Force*, 166.

31. Barrett, *Soul-Force*, 169.

32. Two soldiers were killed, and the revolutionaries were captured and given the death sentence.

33. Clarke, *Black Paradise*, 50.

34. Rex Nettleford, *Identity, Race and Protest in Jamaica* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1972), 50.

35. *Ibid.*, 68-71.

36. Ibid., 64.

37. Although in 1966, at the World Congress on Evangelism in Berlin, Selassie affirmed his faith as a Christian and, to the day of his death, thought the Rastafarians were misguided in their religious claims, the movement benefited from its association with the name of His Imperial Majesty. See Haile Selassie I, "Building an Enduring Tower," in Carl F. H. Henry and W. Stanley Mooneyham, eds., *World Congress on Evangelism*, Vol. 1: *Berlin 1966* (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1967), 19-21.

38. Clarke, *Black Paradise*, 52.

39. Frank Jan van Dijk, *Jahmaica: Rastafari and Jamaican Society, 1930-1990* (Utrecht: ISOR, 1993), 186-232.

40. Leonard Barrett, *The Rastafarians: The Dreadlocks of Jamaica* (1977; reprint, London: William Heinemann, 1988), 235.

41. Rex Nettleford, *Caribbean Cultural Identity: The Case of Jamaica* (Kingston: Herald, 1978), 22.

42. Bob Marley, "Chant Down Babylon" (Bob Marley Music Ltd./Almo Music Corp., ASCAP), on *Confrontation*, performed by Bob Marley and the Wailers, Island Records 90085, 1983.

43. The delightful song "Reggae Ambassador," by W. Clarke, M. Cooper, S. Coore, R. Daley, and W. Stewart can be found on Third World's album *Serious Business*, Polygram/Mercury 836-952-1, 1989.

44. See Frank Jan van Dijk, "Chanting Down Babylon Outernational," Chapter 11 in this book; and Peter E. J. Buiks, *Surinaamse jongeren op de Kruiskade: Overleven in een etnische randgroep* (Deventer, Neth.: Van Loghum Slaterus, 1983), 153-89.

45. On his melodica, a handheld wind instrument with keyboard—a kind of flute-piano—Augustus Pablo issues a "Chant to King Selassie I," while Freddie MacGregor matches his chanting down Babylon with an uplifting "Zion Chant."

About the Contributors

KEVIN J. AYLMEYER, schoolteacher, archivist, and a student of folk music, is an authority on Marcus Garvey's Harlem years (1916-1925). He combines field research in Caribbean culture with radio broadcasting in his forthcoming book *Word, Sound and Power: Reggae Music and the Return of Marcus Garvey*. He has contributed numerous articles to publications such as the *Boston Globe*, *Yankee*, *Reggae and African Beat*, *Reggae Report*, *Rhythm Music*, and *American History Illustrated*.

BARRY CHEVANNES is a leading Caribbean social anthropologist and head of the Department of Sociology and Social Work, as well as dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, at the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica. An authority on Afro-Caribbean religions and culture, Chevannes has done extensive research among the Rastafarians over the last three decades. He is the author of *Rastafari: Roots and Ideology* (1994), editor of *Rastafari and Other African-Caribbean Worldviews* (1995), and has written numerous articles on Rastafari.

REV. CLINTON CHISHOLM, consulting editor for this *Reader* and Jamaica's well-known modern Christian apologist, has studied and debated on Rastafari for more than twenty years. From his many tapes, radio and television talks and interviews, and newspaper columns, Chisholm has authored two volumes, *A Matter of Principle* and *For the Record* (1997-1998). He is a Human Resource Development and Training consultant and lecturer at the Caribbean Graduate School of Theology.

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RANDAL L. HEPNER did his Ph.D. in sociology at the New School for Social Research and taught sociology and religion at New York University. His Ph.D. dissertation, "Movement of Jah People: Race, Class, and Religion among the Rastafari of Jamaica and New York City," is the first substantive historical and ethnographic study of the Rastafari movement in North America.

CLINTON HUTTON, Jamaican political scientist, artist, and painter, teaches in the Department of Government at the University of the West Indies. He has published several works on social-political movements in nineteenth-century Jamaica and has a forthcoming book, *Race, Philosophy, Social Psychology and Identity in the Caribbean* (1998). Hutton's painting hobby covers multicultural themes, peoples, and the environment; he did the Rastafari painting on the cover of this *Reader*.

RUPERT LEWIS, political scientist and Marcus Garvey scholar, heads the Department of Government as well as African and African-Diaspora Studies in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the

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ADRIAN ANTHONY MCFARLANE is professor of philosophy and chair of the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Hartwick College in Oneonta, New York. The Jamaican-born Princeton-Oneonta resident teaches a winter study-abroad course on Marcus Garvey and Rastafari every year in Jamaica, where his Hartwick students get to meet and hear his brother and other leading Rastafarians. He has also taught at Rider University, New Jersey, and was a visiting scholar at Oxford University. He is the author of *A Grammar of Fear and Evil: A Husserlian-Wittgensteinian Hermeneutic* and has contributed several essays to academic journals.

NATHANIEL SAMUEL MURRELL is assistant professor of Philosophy and Religion at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. He has taught at the College of Wooster in Ohio, as well as at the Caribbean Graduate School of Theology in Kingston, Jamaica, which he cofounded in the mid-1980s. Through awards from the American Academy of Religion and the College of Wooster, he conducted research on Rastafari in Jamaica in the early 1990s and has contributed to books and encyclopedias on multicultural issues and African American and Caribbean studies. He is coauthoring an *Introduction to Caribbean Religions*.

REX NETTLEFORD, internationally known Caribbean scholar, trade union educator, social and cultural historian, and political analyst, is deputy vice-chancellor of the University of the West Indies. The founder, artistic director, and choreographer of the internationally acclaimed National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica, he was also adviser to the government of Jamaica, the CAO, OAS, UNESCO, and other international organizations. Nettleford is also editor of the *Caribbean Quarterly*, a pioneer in Rastafarian research in Jamaica, and author of more than a dozen books and numerous articles on Caribbean culture.

VERENA RECKORD, journalist and folklorist, is a specialist in Caribbean art and culture, working with radio, newspaper and other Jamaican media. From her research on Jamaican culture prior to the 1980s, she published two of the most important essays in print on Rastafarian music; her 1977 and 1983 publications are recast in this volume.

MAUREEN ROWE, or "Sister P," is the former director of the African-Caribbean Institute of Jamaica and the executive director of the National Environmental Societies Trust of Jamaica. As a practicing Rastafarian who has witnessed firsthand significant shifts in the movement, she is one of the most authentic Rastafarian voices in the literature and the leading authority on women in Rastafari. She writes and lectures on Rastafari when her full-time employment in the Babylon shystem makes it possible for her to do so.

NEIL J. SAVISHINSKY teaches anthropology at Columbia University, New York. He has won several fellowships that have allowed him to do extensive research on Rastafari in Africa, South Asia, Western Europe, and the Caribbean. Savishinsky is the author of several essays on the global spread of Rastafari and is a leading authority on the movement in West Africa.

GEORGE EATON SIMPSON, professor emeritus of sociology and anthropology at Oberlin College, Ohio, is the pioneer in the field of Caribbean religions. He was among the first scholar to do field research on revivalism and the first to undertake a scholarly investigation of Rastafari in Jamaica (in 1953). Simpson has published several often-cited works on Rastafari and religions in the African diaspora and is a seasoned authority on Rastafari.

WILLIAM DAVID SPENCER has been an adjunct professor of theology for over two decades, first for New York Theological Seminary and currently for Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary's Center for Urban Ministerial Education in Boston. He also teaches periodically at the Caribbean Graduate School of Theology in Kingston, Jamaica, and he has done research on Rastafari since 1976. He has authored, coauthored, and edited several books, among them *The Prayer Life of Jesus*, *Mysterium and Mystery: The Clerical Crime Novel*, *God Through the Looking Glass*, *Joy through the Night*, *Second Corinthians: Bible Study Commentary*, *The Goddess Revival*, *The Global God*, and the forthcoming *Dread Jesus*. He has an impressive collection of reggae music and primary sources on Rastafari.

ROGER STEFFENS, actor, lecturer, and archivist, is the founding editor of *The Beat* magazine and creative director, writer, and narrator of *Soul Almighty*, the first Bob Marley CD-ROM (1996). He is the chairman of the Reggae Grammy Committee and has lectured widely on the life of Bob Marley. Steffens is coauthor of *Bob Marley: Spirit Dancer* (1994) and two forthcoming volumes: *Old Fire Sticks: The Autobiography of Bunny Wailer* and *Bob Marley and the Wailers: The Definitive Discography*.

IMANI M. TAFARI-AMA, Rastafarian sistren, media journalist, and researcher of Jamaican popular culture, has done extensive research on Rastafari Boo Boo Camps in Jamaica and was part of an entourage to Jamaica of the grandson of Haile Selassie. She is also an activist in the Caribbean women's movement and a courageous critical voice in patriarchal Rastafari.

BURCHELL K. TAYLOR, the most beloved Baptist pastor and sought-after pulpiter in Jamaica (pastor of Bethel Baptist Church in Kingston), did his doctoral dissertation for the University of Leeds on "Caribbean Theology of Liberation and the Book of Revelation." The former president of the Jamaica Baptist Union taught ethics and theology at the Jamaica Theological Seminary and United Theological College of the University of the West Indies. His published essays are a constant reference source on Caribbean theology of liberation.

FRANK JAN VAN DIJK, Dutch cultural anthropologist and managing director of Utrecht University's Department of Developmental Psychology, has done extensive research on Rastafari over the last two decades under the auspices of the Netherlands Foundation for Scientific Research and the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies. In addition to his impressive doctoral dissertation, *Jahmaica: Rastafari and Jamaican Society, 1930-1990*, published in 1993, van Dijk has published several essays on the global spread of Rastafari.

ELEANOR WINT is a senior lecturer in the Department of Sociology and Social Work, University of the West Indies, Mona Campus. She has presented numerous papers on the role of women in Rastafari and is featured in the film *Rastafari Woman*, produced by CEDDO films, Britain. She is also the author of two books for children titled *Marcus Garvey Teaches Us* and *The Life of Marcus Garvey*.

THE STUDENTS: Indigo Bethea and Michael Bruny are seniors at Hartwick College, Oneonta, New York, who have their roots in the United States and the Caribbean. They conducted a very interesting interview with Professor Leonard Barrett, and Indigo who has a book-length manuscript of poems about the challenges of growing up in an urban setting, *Calling Out of Nubia*, was a great resource for completing the Glossary in this volume.