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DEVELOPMENTS IN BLACK THEOLOGY:
FROM RICHARD ALLEN TO MARCUS GARVEY

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DEVELOPMENTS IN BLACK THEOLOGY: FROM RICHARD ALLEN TO MARCUS GARVEY

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores developments in Black Christian theology as they emerged from the early 18th century to the 20th century, in North America and the Caribbean. At the center of this investigation are several Black Christian leaders who, throughout different time periods, organized their race advancement actions around diverse theological ideas concerned with assessing and changing the existing socio-religious conditions facing the black race. Collectively these figures, among many others, represent a credible tradition of Black theology and theological activism in which the progress and expansion of Black Christian life in the west was propelled. The basic intent of this study is to examine these various theologians in their given time periods and geographic locations, while highlighting common as well as varying theological ideas that were espoused and in some cases shared by them. Overall, this essay reconsiders the notions of who may be identified as a theologian, suggesting that in the case of the Black Christian experience a broader context that considers socio-religious activism as an outgrowth of theological ideas, is essential for understanding the Black theological experience.

To the countless souls of black men and women who have died in Africa, America and the West Indies to aid us in our fight for
truth, freedom and rights.

PREFACE

In the course of this study, discussions on black Christian theology, hermeneutics, and exegesis will be addressed in an historical overview that highlights some of the most significant developmental time periods in black theological thought and their advocates. Within this scope several black religious figures, including Marcus Garvey, will be explored and broadly referred to as theologians of sorts. These particular individuals have been identified as theologians for their demonstration of a wide range of theological ideas and activities that reflect the distinct black Christian experience that emerged as early as the mid 1700's in North America and the Caribbean.

While some may debate or even consider unorthodox the usage of the term theologian to identify the selected examples, this study suggests that such classifications in the case of developments in black Christian theology, demand broader conceptual contexts by which the offices and roles of the theologian in the black Christian experience can be more accurately assessed.

The terms 'theology' and 'theologian' within themselves can create definitive challenges concerning what doctrines or individuals they apply to and by whom. Both terms have been used by historical and contemporary figures alike, and have been used to identify people or activities of the ancient past as well as in modern times. With such broad use, the applicability of the terms themselves have changed over time, depending oftentimes on who they are being related to, and who is identifying the subjects.

The entomology of the term 'theology' comes from the Greek words *theos,* meaning "God" and *logo,* meaning "knowledge". The term is of ancient provenance but bears a variety of differing but related meanings.[1] The early Greek thinkers use of theologia referred to the inner mysteries of the God head and its connections to the world. The term used in pagan antiquity meant a mythological explanation of the ultimate mysteries of the world. Stoic thought referred to theology as a more reasoned knowledge of the divine dimensions of things, consisting of the logos structure immanent in the world. Aristotle used the term as a synonym for what he more properly called '1st philosophy or metaphysics'. In more contemporary terms, theology has been suggested to mean the systematic reflection on one's faith.[2] In layman's terms, the religious historian William Placher suggests 'whenever Christians think about what they believe, they are, in a way doing theology'.[3]

The historical roots of Christian theology in the form of institutional learning are found in Alexandria, Egypt. Alexandria became the first nerve center and capitol of the philosophical and intellectual Christian world. It served as the home for the world's first schools for theological studies as early as 190 A.D. Alexandria produced Christianity's earliest theologians, such as Titus Flavius Clement, Origen, and Arenaeus, who inspired a tradition of Christian thought and learning that would be carried on for centuries. In the Alexandrian setting, theological activities and studies encompassed broad ranging issues concerning Christian doctrine, philosophy and teaching, all of which essentially

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[1] Joseph Komonchak, *The New Dictionary of Theology,* Ed. Michael Glazier, (Inc. Delaware. 1987), p. 1011.
[2] William Placher, *A History of Christian Theology: An Introduction.* (, Louisville: Westminster Press, 1983), p. 12.
[3] Ibid.,

culminated around the divine objective of spreading the beliefs and teachings of the Christian faith.

Nearly a thousand years later, after centuries of fractious divisions between Eastern and Western Christian traditions, theological activities and studies in the west began evolving into a systematic discipline within the growing academic centers throughout Europe in the 12th century. The disparate nature of the doctrinal divisions between eastern and western Christendom, paralleled the theological differences among traditions as well. As western theology became more associated with universities, the academic study of the Christian faith morphed into a far more theoretical subject, concerned less about the practical matters of prayer and spirituality that had once been the emphasis with theological pursuits most often found in the monasteries. Thus theology and its practice changed in many ways. The writings of Peter Abelard and Gilbert de La Porree at the University of Paris, Thomas Aquinas, along with other scholars at medieval universities, became increasingly theoretical, as intellectual discussions of Christian beliefs in general. This pattern emerged as a defining characteristic of western theology.[4]

Within the scope of this study, concerned with black Christian theology in the west, the more pragmatic nature of theology is rediscovered and resurrected by black theologians whose socio-political activism was an intrinsic part of their theological activities. As activists, their theological ideas were fundamentally more concerned with the practical issues of the faith as an instrument of racial and religious uplift. Theology as it relates to the historical black Christian experience in the west, can be understood to be

[4] Alistere E. McGrath, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the history of Christian Thought.* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc. 1998), p. 7.

the ideas and actions of black Christian thinkers who sought to interpret the doctrine, teachings of their Christian faith, and the significant meanings of the scriptures as it related to the black race in particular, and the human race in general. Additionally, a theologian in this study, is considered to be an individual who has engaged in these theological activities and in turn communicated the meanings through sermons, speeches, publications, or social actions with the objective of redeeming and advancing the black race religiously.

Considering the broader multidisciplinary approaches to the study of the bible and religious movements in the west, much of the scholarship has been dominated by highly Eurocentric frameworks that have in many ways been limited or reduced to paradigms based on theological engagements and bible text interpretations solely from the western European or American cultural religious experience. The marginalization of non-European experiences suffers the broader survey of Christian theological developments greatly. The suggestion of re-centering European American dominated religious studies around African American and Caribbean perspectives offers a critically challenging agenda that goes beyond the ethnocentric experience and comes to include broader socio-cultural issues. Issues concerned with, in what ways text interpretations function and take on radically different meanings in cultural communities that are oppressed, by religiously European dominated societies, and how such communities engage and act on the interpretations for socio-religious purposes, are important examples.[5]

[5] Vincent Wimbush, ed., *African Americans and the Bible: Sacred Texts and Social Textures,* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc.,2000), p. 2.

Concerned with the lack of discourse and research on such issues Dr. Vincent Winbush posed several thought provoking issues as the basis for a conference devoted to this topic, suggesting:

> The substitution of African Americans as cultural-hermeneutical template in the study of the bible is compelling because African Americans are still a generally ignored and unproblematized but haunting starting point of reference with enormous potential to trip biblical scholars and other types of scholars onto a higher level of critical (self) consciousness and their practices. The focus upon such a people will force the study of the bible to begin with some fundamental self-inventorying, phenomenological and sociopolitical, sociopsychological questions and issues...the African American engagement of the bible is too much a rupture, a disruption, a disturbance or explosion of the Europeanized and white protestant North American spin on the bible and its traditions not to begin with the fundamental and open questions that can inspire the most nuanced intellectual work.[6]

The present inquiry also concerns itself with this enterprise as it traces the particular ways certain black theologian activists engaged their bibles and produced an array of theological ideas, hermeneutics and activities that revealing how the nature of the black religious experience espoused radically different interpretations and applications of scripture. Such a survey highlights and considers the broader quests for meanings that societies and cultures develop in relating the bible to their socio-religious situations. The uniqueness of the black religious experience and theological developments in North America and the Caribbean from slavery to the 20th century, illustrates one of the most dynamic eras of Christian thought and activism in western Christendom. This study will challenge scholars to reconsider the place and role of the black Christian experience and the black theological developments that emerged from it.

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[6] Ibid., 9.

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Introduction

Historically, black Christian theologians and their movements in the west can be identified as having developed in various stages. Many of these movements are apparent as early as the eighteenth century, initially emerging in the early independent black church movements. The first independent black church movements preceded a brief period of black Christian militancy and radicalism of the nineteenth century that formed within the advanced stages of the abolitionist cause against slavery. By the mid to late nineteenth century, Black Nationalist and Pan African oriented theologians emerged setting the stage for the twentieth century religious activism of Marcus Garvey. Each of the mentioned stages have been distinguished by numerous contributors, of which a few have been focused on for this study. The examples to be studied here are Richard Allen; George Liele; David Walker; Nat Turner; Sam Sharpe; Paul Bogle; Alexander Crummel; Edward Blyden and Marcus Garvey. Collectively, these individuals represent a vanguard of religious activists who, throughout different time periods, organized their race advancement actions around diverse theological ideas concerned with assessing and changing the existing black socio-religious conditions, marking each of these leaders as active theologians within their own distinct settings.

As we detect the changing stages within the black Christian experience throughout different time periods, the application of the title theologian also changes. The terms and office of theologian is conferred upon many different religiously inspired individuals who, being faced with a variety of circumstances, dealt with their immediate

situations through the prism of their own theological reasoning.[1] Collectively, these black Christian leaders established a credible tradition of black theology and theological activity by which the progress and expansion of black Christian life in the west was propelled. The current study looks at the different stages and initiators of these broad theological developments, while also emphasizing common theological themes and characteristics that in some cases can be seen as carryovers, linking many of the ideas and visions of different theologians across stages.

One particular example of a reoccurring theme is the distinctive parallels made by these religious activists between the enslaved and oppressed black experiences in the west and the 'chosen people' of ancient Israel and their struggles in biblical times. The symbolism of the Israelite bondage and the suffering Christ figure juxtaposed with the black experience became important themes that transcended different stages of black theological ideas. Other theological ideas dealing with fundamental religious autonomy and self-determination, salvation, redemption, and the destiny of the black race, as they related to the struggle for black liberation and racial advancement will also be explored. All of these themes inspired various social activities including militant revolts at different times.

Another important issue to be considered are the important parallel developments that occur geographically and temporally between the black religious and theological movements in North America and the Caribbean, revealing common links between the regions as well.

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[1]For more views on the office or title 'black theologian' see James Cone's *God of the Oppressed.* (Seabury Press, Inc. 1975), pp. 8-9. In his introduction, Cone discusses black theologians in terms of their roles as exegetes, prophets, teachers, preachers and philosophers.

This study further suggests that the twentieth century Black Nationalist and Pan Africanist leader, Marcus Garvey, can also be identified as a black theologian within this broader theological tradition. Garvey's unique Christian philosophy exemplified common theological ideas that were prevalent amongst black theologians prior to and during the twentieth century. While his theology embraced various characteristics ranging from the affirmation of black cultural heritage and presence in biblical antiquity, to ideas about the relationship between God, Christ and the salvation of the black race, he also articulated his own original theological concepts of religious work ethics, self-reliance, and racial destiny through the religious redemption of Africa and the African race. The similar religious ideas and activities shared by Garvey and his predecessors, along with Garvey's own critical theological ideas, confirm him as a theologian within the larger tradition of black theology. His status as a theologian further demonstrates how his own theology served as the ideological basis for his organizational philosophy and doctrine for race advancement.

Chapter 1

Early Black Christian Activism and the Pioneers of Black Theology: Richard Allen and George Leile

The black Christian theology that emerged in the 18th and early 19th centuries reflected an important period in the growth and development of black Christian thought in North America and the Caribbean. In this era, significant events took place that essentially formed the foundation and set the course for black Christian life well into the twentieth century.

The establishment of the first black churches on the eve of the nineteenth century and the abolition of slavery in the Caribbean in 1834 and in the United States in 1865, mark critical junctures in the development of black Christianity and theology in the west. The founding of the first independent black churches represented the beginning of black religious autonomy and the new institutional power bases that would be used as platforms for racial advancement. The abolition of slavery, which followed the advent of independent churches, signaled the initial steps taken towards racial advancement socially. These two events revealed the intrinsic relationship that would develop between black theology and the black socio-political struggle for racial advancement. This relationship introduced early forms of liberation centered theology, that became an essential defining characteristic of the developing black Christian theological tradition.

The liberation centered theologies in this study demonstrate the strategic use of the Christian doctrine as a platform by which the issues of spirituality and race advancement were addressed simultaneously by these black Christian leaders.

The emergence of the early black theological activism, however, did not occur by happenstance or independent of other religious developments. Black theological activities developed simultaneously along side other religious changes that were taking place in the mainstream white protestant religious communities throughout America and the Caribbean identified as the 'Great Awakenings' beginning in the 1750's. It was in the atmosphere of major religious change that the early black Christian theological voice would be first heard.

White protestant Christian thought in North America and the Caribbean, has undergone many periods of change since the first European contact with the New World. In the brief period of less than five hundred years, a vast number of different Christian theologies and doctrines expressing the Eurocentric beliefs and ideals about God, Jesus Christ, the Gospels and concepts of human destiny and salvation were circulated. The expansion of this diverse religious phenomenon was instrumentally merged within the greater colonial schemes of the times. As a conducive agent for European racial supremacy in the New World, the various forms of white Christianity served to dictate and justify Eurocentric ideas of moral law over the indigenous and enslaved peoples of the New World society[2].

The Great Awakenings, which occurred within white Protestantism, remain as significant points of change in New World Christianity. The distinct eras in which the Awakenings occurred mark important periods of transformation that had dynamic impact on the social issues and concerns of the day for white Christians. These periods would also affect black people religiously and politically in indirect ways.

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[2] Milton Sernett._*Black Religion and American Evangelism: White Protestant Plantation Missions and the Flowering of Negro Christianity 1787-1865*, (. New Jersey : Scarecrow Press Inc. 1975).

Author William Mcgloughlin suggested that America had four major religious awakening citing the first from 1725 to 1750; the second from 1795 to 1835; the third from 1875 to 1915 and the fourth from 1945 to 1970.[3]

> In each of these periods a theological and ecclesiastical reorientation coincided with an intellectual and social reorientation in such a way as to awaken a new interest in Christian ethos which underlies American civilization.[4]

The early notions of 'American civilization', in many ways were shaped and influenced by the ideas of the religious awakenings. The doctrines of predestination and manifest destiny, which saw the European immigrants to be a special people of God in the New World, destined to redeem and establish the new 'promised land', are two key examples. The Awakenings also played a key role in molding the Protestant ideas of America's destiny as a nation as well. The American revolution of 1776 itself, came after the first Awakening, perhaps religiously inspiring the nationalistic fervor and concept of a 'free and independent people,' while the second era of revivals created the definition of what it meant to be an 'American' under pretexts influenced by the ideas of manifest destiny that had arisen in the new nation. The third Awakening, following the Civil War from 1875-1915, helped confirm the sense of the Union espousing the language and idea of 'one nation, indivisible under God, with liberty and justice for all.'[5]

While playing such influential roles, questions about the 'Great Awakenings' have naturally been raised in terms of what an 'awakening' or revival actually was? How did they come about? Who do they involve? and in what ways did they affect society,

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[3]William Mcgloughlin. *Modern Revivalism: Charles Finney to Billy Graham*, (New York: Ronald Press Company 1959), p.8.

[4] Ibid.

institutionally, politically and spiritually? And most importantly for this study how did these movements impact black people in America and the Caribbean?

The Awakenings have been described as periods of fundamental social and intellectual reorientation of the white American religious beliefs or value systems. Awakenings also reflected changes in white behavior patterns and institutional structures.[6] Frequently, these periods of socio-religious change actually began in a crisis of beliefs and values, where changes oftentimes appeared to be the results of a critical confusion in self-understanding, cultural distortion and grave personal stress. These instances lead to the serious questioning or loss of faith in the legitimacy of certain social norms and expectations.[7]

The anthropologist, Anthony F.C. Wallace suggested

> ...when a society finds that its day to day behavior has deviated so far from the accepted (traditional) norms that neither individuals nor large groups can honestly or consistently sustain the common set of religious understandings by which they believe they should act...the leaders lose their authority and institutions the respect essential for their effective operation, then men begin to doubt their sense and their sanity and begin to search for new gods, new ways to perceive and comprehend the power that guides the universe.[8]

Another social anthropologist Seymour M. Lipset, suggested that a religious revival or Great Awakening begins 'when accumulated pressures for change produce such acute personal and societal stress that the whole culture must break the crust of custom and

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[5] Ibid., 1.

[6] William Mcgloughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607-1977.* (Chicago and London:The University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 10.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., Quoted from Mcgloughlin, *Revivals*. p. 12.

crash through to find new socially structured avenues to establish greater mutual harmony.'[9]

Other more skeptical or rationalist explanations for the mass religious awakenings saw such revivals as the by-products of individual conversions stemming from self-induced psychological or emotional adjustments or personality conflicts. Charismatic, spellbinding preachers hypnotically manipulating crowd psychology, and nationwide revival movements were seen as waves of mass hysteria generated by political or social stresses, which baffled and thwarted the average man.[10]

Different factors and causes for the Awakenings were at work on the white Christian mind on many levels, simultaneously involving economic, political, social and spiritual, issues that influenced white thought, of which some were suggested by Mcgloughlin to be linked to a few general circumstances.

Mcgloughlin proposed that a grave theological reorientation within the churches, (a process invariably connected with a general intellectual reorientation of American society at large), along with an ecclesiastical conflict associated with such a reorientation can be identified as key contributors. The author suggested 'the grave sense of social and spiritual cleavage both within the churches and between the churches and the world coming from the pietistic dissatisfaction with the prevailing order, all represent plausible proponents that could lead to such dramatic religious changes.'[11]

Of particular significance to this study's focus concerning black theological developments are the changes in white American socio-religious thought that were greatly influenced by the moral debate on the issue of slavery. The slavery issue alone

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[9] Ibid.,15.
[10] Mcloughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, p. 6.

can be considered to be one of the most critical factors behind the white Christian religious reorientation occurring in the midst of the Awakenings. Slavery forced major reconsideration of white America's faith, social norms and institutions among many religious minded whites. The nature of these changes sparked the further growth of sects and denominationalism in the new world Christendom.

With the achievement of political independence for America, the former colonies began moving slowly towards implementing religious freedom, voluntary church membership and acceptance of denominationalism. America's free-market religion now included Anglican, Congregationalists, Baptists and Methodists as well as others. These developments introduced a new religious pluralism, where American church members represented the acceptance of denominationalism as evidence that the nation as a whole, rather than any particular church or sect, was the object of a broader divine mission.[12] Some of these denominations in their own ways, would eventually become concerned with the issues of slavery, but did not immediately move towards emancipation. Many who were involved with slave missions instead concentrated on developing a peculiar brand of evangelism that sought to introduce a Eurocentric view of the gospels to the slaves that promoted docility and obedience to slavery, without upsetting the current plantocracy establishment.

The evangelical outreach to black slaves in America can be roughly detected by the early 1790's with the major denominations involved with slaves being largely Baptist, Methodists and some Presbyterians.[13] The objective of the plantation evangelism was to

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[11] Ibid.,
[12] Milton Sernett, *Black Religion and American Evangelism: White Protestants, Plantation Missions and the Flowering of Negro Christianity 1787-1865*, p. 25.
[13] Ibid., 32.

convert the slaves to Christianity, while in bondage. The doctrine preached, for the most part promoted a religious complacency to the slaves to accept the temporal world of enslavement with the promise of true freedom in a kingdom beyond. Because most evangelists could only access the slaves through the permission of the master, their sermons and contacts with slaves were heavily monitored. Ideas of emancipation among these particular denominational evangelism, however, would only occur later.

The slave missions linked to the abolitionist cause represented the changing attitude of a growing number of religious whites towards slavery, who had begun to realize the moral problem of slavery and the hypocrisy behind the religious rationalization of enslaving blacks and the inhumane treatment toward them. The slavery debate in many ways created a platform issue for the Second Great Awakening revivals, which were greatly concerned with moral values at that time.

The Caribbean is not without its own experience of very similar religious activity. The Protestant evangelism that emerged from the national revival movements in America would also be seen heavily involved in parallel transformations taking place in the Caribbean as well. Direct links with specific evangelical groups and activities also occurred in Jamaica.

In Jamaica, Baptist and Methodist evangelical activism is detected as early as the 1780's. The first Baptist mission to Jamaica was initiated by George Liele, a free black man from Georgia, who was responsible for establishing the first independent black church in America, around 1779. After great pressure from white racists and outright attacks on the members of the church, Liele left America for Jamaica in 1783, with his fugitive former master. Liele organized the first Baptist church of Jamaica in Kingston

and by 1791, his church had 450 members who were all black and mostly slaves. It would not be until some thirty years later that the Baptist Missionary Society of England would begin to send missionaries from England to Jamaica.[14] The Baptist congregations would continue to grow in number throughout the late 1830's and early 1840's, becoming one of the most influential Christian movements among blacks not just in Jamaica but throughout the Caribbean as well.

The Methodists were also very active in the evangelist missions in Jamaica. Around the same time Liele's work in Kingston began, William Hemment a Methodist preacher also in Kingston succeeded in establishing a chapel large enough to hold 1,200 worshippers. By 1802, the House of Assembly in Jamaica published an act aimed at persons described as 'ill-disposed', illiterate and ignorant enthusiasts who addressed persons meetings of Negroes and persons of color, chiefly slaves, unlawfully assembled, inciting them to 'concoct schemes of much private and public mischief' In 1804 the King disallowed this Act.[15] By 1807 however, the Kingston Council prohibited the holding of religious meetings in Kingston and its precincts before sunrise or after sunset, which was during the only free time the slaves had.[16]

It was in this same period of white religious transformation that blacks in North America and the Caribbean began to articulate their own definitive form of Christianity. The emergence of religious thought essentially marked the beginning of a black Christian theological tradition that would be rooted in efforts for black emancipation and racial advancement destined to influence black socio-political and religious affairs for

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[14] George Eaton Simpson, *Black Religions in the New World*, (New York: Columbia University Press 1978), p. 42.
[15] Ibid., 40.
[16] Ibid.

generations to come. The growth and developments of the early black Christian theological traditions greatly influenced the rise of the black abolitionist movement. It is important to note that many of the early and most outspoken black abolitionists were preachers or religiously inspired individuals.

Abolitionist preachers fulfilled key roles while ushering in the Christian doctrine among free and enslaved blacks. One role was as a theologian responsible for formulating a practical relationship between the scriptures and the immediate needs and concerns of the black community. The broader activities of their function would also include the advancement of communal worship, economic support through communal charity and education. Another important role was serving as a political activist on behalf of the black community in the larger political arena, which would in some instances include leading revolts or rebellions. As an official spokesperson and representative, the abolitionist preachers forged their fundamental Christian theology into the basis for their political fight against slavery and the attempt to advance blacks to equal social status.

Although many of the Christian doctrines with which blacks initially came into contact by way of white Christians were grossly Eurocentric in bias, there still emerged a tradition of black Christian views that were distinctly rooted in the black experience. There are numerous figures that stand out as major contributors to this early tradition who introduced black Christian ideas ranging from autonomous worship to violent revolts. Of these Richard Allen and George Liele are to important pioneers of the earliest black church movements in North American and the Caribbean. The activism and theological ideas of these two men laid the ground work for a wide range of black Christian movements that would later emerge later even in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Richard Allen

Most widely known for his efforts in the establishment of one of the first independent black churches in North America, Richard Allen remains as a pioneer and co-founder of the early black church movement. Trained and ordained in the Methodist denomination, Allen was one among a small number of free blacks who joined the white denomination by the mid to late 1700's. Although white Methodists took pride in proclaiming their liberal stance against slavery by opening their doors to black worshippers the problem of racism even among the most liberal whites became an explosive issue. Increased black membership of certain churches, like the St. George Methodist Church in Philadelphia, where Allen was a member, began to exhibit forms of segregated worship. The actual denial of certain seating within the sanctuary of St. George's Church to the black members in 1787 exposed the hypocrisy that was still evident amongst the so-called liberal Christian whites, who were still reluctant to accept blacks as equals. The incident led to the exodus of Allen and the majority of other black members out of that church, and the birth of an autonomous, independent black church.

The institutionalized racism of the Methodist church, that denied blacks full participation was the catalyst for Allen's visions to establish an independent black church, signified an important phase in the early stages of black theological development, in terms of independent worship and the development of black theological views. It foreshadowed what would later blossom in the ideas of black institutional independence championed by the nineteenth and twentieth century nationalist theologians.

Allen recognized the distinctive religious needs of black people at the time and concluded that a separate and independent church served by black clergy would be the

most effective mission for the black community. Although Allen never completely severed ties with the mother Methodist church and conference, as it was necessary to remain linked in order for his church to maintain denominational status, he still introduced a new offshoot black theology. Allen's doctrine for the African Methodist Episcopal Church still upheld and recognized the fundamental tenants of the Methodist Conference, never intending to abort the church's central principles. His theological views and ministry, however, reflected what black theologians would do for generations after him, in tactically formulating and adapting a distinct Christian theology that met the specific religious and social needs of black people.

Allen demonstrated this activism through his skillful organizing and implementation of the black church into the heart of the black community. It was Allen's intent to provide a secure place for blacks to worship and gather socially as independent people, free from white religious and social racism. The church would also serve as an economic and educational resource center for the local blacks. The consolidated foundation of the church as the earliest institutionalized power base in the black community created the space for Allen's theological ideas of the day to be nurtured and utilized as essential components for black Christian life and liberation.

As with many other black religious leaders at the time, Allen believed that moral improvement was essentially needed in the black community enslaved and free and this was only possible through the gospel of Christ. Allen felt the infusion of Christianity into the black community would strengthen the communities by overcoming what he saw as moral deficiencies; sin, selfishness and vice, that weakened the race. In Allen's eyes the conquering of these moral deficiencies through faith in turn became the basis by which

blacks would no longer be seen as inferior, disarming the racist rationalization that blacks were only suited for subordinate, subhuman status. Allen's theological objectives ultimately sought to raise the quality of human relationships as well as the overall quality of life within the community. Key elements of his theology in addition to moral reform included the push for broader communal self-reliance and solidarity through charity and education.

As an abolitionist, Allen critically viewed the crippling impact of slavery on blacks, believing the degraded social status and ignorance of blacks could be attributed to the negative affects and consequences of slavery, a theme popularized by many black Christian thinkers of this time. Allen identified these conditions as the source of moral deficiencies, once writing:

> Men must be willfully blind and extremely partial, that cannot see the contrary effects of liberty and slavery upon the mind of man: I truly confess the vile, habits often acquired in a state of servitude, are not easily thrown off...[17]

In response to the conditions that bound black life in slavery and social oppression, Allen worked through the church, developing a theology designed to discipline, strengthen and uplift the black community on economic, political and educational levels. This race advancement focus surfaced both in Allen's sermon themes, as well as in various programs within the A.M.E. church.

Sermons would become the instrumental means by which Allen would communicate the ideas for racial uplift and advancement as well as important social critiques of the racist and oppressive world they lived in. His sermons would cover many

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[17] Richard Allen, *The Life Experience and Gospel Labours of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen: To Which Is Annexed The Rise and Progress of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America*, (New York Abirgden Press, 1960), p. 70.

topics relating to the issues faced by the black community at the time. In many of his sermons Allen would defy the stereotyping of blacks as inferior beings, at the same time attacking the criminality of slavery and discrimination. In one particular sermon Allen challenged the popular attitude of whites who stigmatized blacks as inferiors fit only for servitude.

> ... try what you can to prevent our rising from a state of barbarism you present us to be in; but we can tell from a degree of experience, that a black man, although reduced to the most abject state of human nature is capable of, short of real madness, can think, reflect and feel injuries, although it may not be with the same degree of keen resentment and revenge that you have been and are our great oppressors would manifest, if reduced to the pitiful conditions of a slave...[18]

Allen's theology foreshadowed glimpses of nationalist sentiments and the ideas of racial self-determination that would develop later among other theologians such as Alexander Crummel, Edward Blyden and Marcus Garvey. In practical terms, Allen worked to instill not only a sense of moral discipline amongst black people, but also responsibility to their own black community as well. Allen emphasized the importance of charity as a service unto God and a means by which it could meet communal needs in a sermon:

> ...we may take a short, general view of the advantages and benefits attending the exercise of that particular branch of Christian charity, which consists in the applying and bestowing some part of our substance or produce of our labors towards relief and support of the poor and the needy; or in contributing towards such works of piety and mercy as are intended and contrived for the real good and bettering the condition of our indignant brethren, either by public or private ways of charity. And by this we improve our talents to the glory of the Almighty and the welfare of our own immortal

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[18] Ibid., 69.

souls.[19]

Allen's statement illustrates more clearly how he implemented fundamental doctrine into social action.

Allen also initiated programs in the Bethel A.M.E. church, which offered services to the community, encouraging blacks to look beyond their own needs and offer help to those less fortunate. One of these programs was a school for black children at Bethel. Allen, saw education as a key to racial uplift and advancement as well declaring:

> We believe if you would try the experiment of taking a few black children, and cultivate their minds with the same care and let them have the same prospect in view as to living in the world as you would wish for your own children, you would find upon the trial, they were not inferior in mental endowments...[20]

Allen and his efforts through the established AME church served as early agents of black Christian nationalism, initiating an era of independent black religious thought and racial self-reliance. As a black theologian, his activities provided a classic example of how black Christian theological activism served as the ideological basis for socio-religious programs aimed at racial emancipation and advancement. Allen established the early black church as the social resource base and political platform by which such objectives would be achieved.

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[19] Ibid., 79.
[20] Ibid., 69.

George Leile

Similar religious activities are also be seen in the Jamaican around this time, witnessed in the works of George Liele, another rising black theologian activist. George Liele was a key figure who played an important role in the early development of the independent black church not only in North America but Jamaica as well. As an industrious and resourceful leader, Liele founded the first black Baptist churches near Savannah Georgia around 1773. With the support from his master, Mr. Henry Sharp who granted his freedom, Liele organized this influential church in Yamacrow, a suburb of Savaanah. Among the early members of the Yamacrow church were Reverend David George, who later labored with permission from the governor in the ministry at Nova Scotia with some sixty communicants and Rev. Amos, who preached with good results at New Providence, one of the Bahama islands, to about three hundred members. Liele also moved to repentance a more useful man Andrew Bryan, who would later become his successor to this church.[21]

During the American war for independence, Liele chose to support the British like many other blacks because the British offered freedom to those blacks fighting for the crown. Leile's freedom however came only after some challenging circumstances. Liele's former master Sharp was an officer in the war and died from wounds received in the King's service. After his death some persons were dissatisfied with Liele's liberation and he was eventually imprisoned. He was later released however, by means of his official manumission papers and the assistance of one Colonel Kirkland a British officer

[21] John W. Davis, "George Leile and Andrew Bryan: Pioneer Negro Baptist Preachers." *The Journal of Negro History*, 3 (1918): 120.

based in Kingston Jamaica. Following his emancipation, Leile left for Jamaica to work for his sponsor. Liele described his move Kingston and the

> At the vacuation of the country I was partly obliged to come to Jamaica as an indented servant, for money I owed him, he promising to be my friend in this country. I was landed at Kingston and by the colonel's recommendation to general Campbell, the governor of the island, I was employed by him for two years and on leaving the island, he gave me a written certificate from under his own hand for my good behavior.[22]

As soon as Liele paid his debt to Colonel Kirkland, he obtained for himself and family a certificate of freedom from the vestry records according to the law of the island.

In his new found freedom, Liele was compelled to continue his missionary work in Jamaica. Similar to Allen, Liele's theology reflected his vision to establish spaces for black communal worship, while introducing fundamental Christian principles to the enslaved and small free populations. Leile described his new organization roots and religious activism in Kingston:

> I began about September 1784, to preach in Kingston, in a small private home to a good smart congregation and I formed the church with four brethren from America besides myself, and the preaching took very good effect with the poorer sort, especially the slaves. The people at first persecuted us both at meetings and baptisms, but God be praised, they seldom interrupt us now. We applied to the Honorable House of Assembly with a petition of our distress, being poor people, desiring to worship Almighty God, according to the tenants of the Bible and they have granted us liberty and given us their sanction. Thanks be to God we have liberty to worship him as we please in the kingdom.[23]

Liele's churches in Kingston constituted not only the first Baptist church in Jamaica, but they were also the first independent black churches as well. As he had once done in

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[22] Carter G. Woodson, ed., "What the Negro Was Thinking During the 18th Century. Letters showing the Rise and Progress of the early Negro Churches of Georgia and the West Indies." *The Journal of Negro History*, 1 (January 1916): 71.
[23] Ibid., 71-72.

Savannah, Liele's efforts to establish the church as a central institution within the black community in Jamaica, highlights the pragmatic concerns of his theology. Liele's theology can best be understood in the context of his church organizing. For Leile, the church served multiple functions as extensions of his theological mission focused on racial solidarity, emancipation and advancement. The churches in Kingston and Spanishtown, were not only houses of worship but they also were centers for what communal resources were available for the free and enslaved communities.

The church activities in Kingston led by Liele invoked a trend of independent black church and organizational movements that would grow prevalent throughout Jamaica in later years. Liele exhibited very similar traits of organizational methods and ethics as did his contemporary, Allen. Using his position in the church as his base, the minister kept horses and wagons as well as being contracted by the Kingston government to serve in local transportation.[24] Liele also saw the importance of education for the community, thus extending the work of the church with the help of a few deacons to involve a free school particularly targeting children.

Because Liele's churches in Kingston and Spanish town were the only independent black churches on the island, his activism was undoubtedly heavily monitored. Therefore, in building up the church members Liele showed effective tactics.

Liele's methods differed from the Methodist approach that was emerging on the island at the same time in different ways. Leile mandated that the church would not receive any slaves who had not obtained permission from their owners. This not only helped to increase the membership, but it also encouraged the masters to support their cause. So careful was Liele to get the confidence of the masters that he ordered a bell for

his church, to signal to the slaves it was meeting, at the same time also warning the masters that their slaves were leaving the plantation for church. Liele's recruiting methods were backed with an even more significant measure, in the 'Church Covenant'. The covenant was a collection of certain passages of scripture that were used once a month and shown to the members of the legislators, magistrates, justices, and masters to secure their approval of giving their slaves permission to become members of the congregations. The Covenant stands as an important reference to Leile's theology and hermeneutic ideas.

Both Allen and Liele represent some of the earliest examples of black Christian religious autonomy. In both cases, the growth and development of the black community through organization and activism was spearheaded by the theological ideas and activities of these two leaders as they established independent black church. Functioning in their many roles, the churches themselves became the headquarters and central source for black social and political initiatives.

These early examples of religious socio-political organizing foreshadow what would later emerge in the Garvey movement. Garvey employed similar methods of organization only on a much grander scale. Like the first churches, Garvey established the Liberty Hall, as the main meeting place and central headquarters for the UNIA in New York around 1919. He would later require every UNIA locale to have a 'Liberty Hall' to serve as the organizational headquarters for each community. The halls served not only as the community meeting place, but also as a sort of social resource center and essentially as a church. In similar ways to the early church pioneers, the halls were used

[24] Davis, "George Leile and Andrew Bryan", p. 122.

for the many religious functions that had been incorporated into the organizational life of the UNIA.

Amy Jacques Garvey noted in her memoirs the various activities the halls were used for:

> Sunday morning worship, afternoon Sunday schools,
> Public meetings at night, concerts and dances...notice
> boards for a room, a job and soup kitchens.[25]

Other similarities that reflect common parallels between Garvey's religious activities and the activities of Allen and Leile, were Garvey's advanced economic and educational initiatives. Both areas were based on his theological ideas of racial responsibility and religious work ethic, to be discussed later in this study. Education and vocational training were two of the basic goals of the UNIA from its inception. Shortly after the forming of the actual organization in 1914, Garvey set out with the intent of creating an industrial training institute based on the Tuskegee model. Schools for children were also implemented by the UNIA to further the education and culture of black boys and girls.

The many initiatives led by Garvey indicate the continued institutional growth and socio-political organization of the black community that had its origins, in the theological work of this early pioneer period. As found with both Allen and Leile, In 1920, Garvey proclaimed his movement to have the effects on the black masses of a religious conversion, declaring:

> The masses of the race absorb the doctrines
> of the UNIA with the same eagerness with
> with which the masses in the days of the supremacy
> of Imperial Rome accepted Christianity. The people
> seem to regard the movement in light of a new religion.[26]

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[25] Robert Hill ed., *Marcus Garvey: Life and* Lessons, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press 1987), p. 403.
[26] Ibid., p. xxxvi.

The ideas and visions of the early black religious pioneers, set the stage for even more militant movements that would rise up in the struggle against slavery, many of which would be led by black religious leaders.

Chapter 2:

Black Christian Militancy Religion and Revolt: David Walker, Nat Turner, Sam Sharpe and Paul Bogle.

The 1820'S and 30's represent another important phase in the developing traditions amongst black Christian theologians, which would later influence theologians like Garvey. This period witnessed the heightened black resistance to slavery, in some instances through the ideas or acts of militant revolts and insurrections, whose origins were often rooted in the liberation oriented theologies of the day. Throughout the American South and several Caribbean islands slave revolts sparked off of one another during these years, accenting a season ripe with radicalized religious activism.

The Haitian revolution of 1794 had a lasting impression on different rebellion movements that would emerge. Following the Haitian revolution, many revolts and insurrections took place in it's wake. After 1794, Virginia experienced 13 revolts, while at least 19 took place in Maryland, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Florida, Georgia and Mississippi and five others occurring in Louisiana.[27]

Some of the revolts that took place in the South and Caribbean were organized and led by religious men who had brought a militant brand of black Christian theology into the heart of the black struggle against slavery. The emergence of more militant doctrines in the resistance struggle signified an important new development of black theological activism that invoked black revolt on the basis of religion. The specific parallels drawn between the ancient Israelite people and enslaved blacks became a popular theme amongst the black Christian leaders. The bible, interpreted through black

[27] St. Clair. Drake, *Redemption of Africa and Black Religion*, (Chicago: Third World Press, 1970), p. 36.

eyes, became the very source of guidance and inspiration for some of the largest and bloodiest revolts that occurred in America and Jamaica in the 1830's.

The more militant black theological ideas of the early 1800's in America, revealed strong traits of apocalypticism and messianism resonating amongst black preachers and slaves. Themes of impending judgement for slaveholders, and revolt by divine sanction and inspiration became especially prevalent in the North American activities of David Walker and Nat Turner. While in the Caribbean, the Jamaican revolts led by Sam Sharpe and Paul Bogle, demonstrated how religion, black preachers and the function of the native church played leading roles in the violent revolts bent on racial emancipation from slavery.

David Walker

David Walker's Appeal, which appeared in 1829, became one of the most powerful anti-slavery statements of the era. In many ways this document set the tone for the rising religious militancy and rebellious atmosphere against slavery, which had become more pronounced. *Walker's Appeal* was steeped with biblical language, references and prophecy. In his pamphlet, Walker mounts his argument against slavery berating the hypocrisy of white Christianity in America, while also vocalizing the urgency of black religious independence.

Walker's Appeal, touched on several theological themes and issues that related directly to the enslaved blacks' immediate circumstances. His theological ideas included many themes that would resurface among other black religious activists and theologians, making several key references paralleling ancient Israelite and black experiences of

bondage. Other themes as included radical ideas dealing with apocalyptic judgement against America's crimes of slavery. Walker's fiery rhetoric ultimately reflected the spirit of the most radical black religious element in the fight against slavery.

In Article I of *Walker's Appeal*, Walker highlighted what had become a very popular theme among black theologians and preachers, comparing enslaved blacks of the day with the ancient Israelites enslaved in Egypt. Yet, Walker's analogy was unique in the sense that his comparison went to the extent of arguing that the black slaves in America were in fact treated and oppressed far worse than the Israelites:

> I know it to be a fact, that some of them take
> the Egyptians to have been a gang of devils,
> not knowing any better that they (Egyptians)
> having got possession of the Lord's people
> treated them not nearly as cruel as Christian Americans
> do us, at the present day... I only made this extract to show how much
> lower we are held, and how much more cruel
> we are treated by the Americans then were
> the children of Jacob by the Egyptians.[28]

Walker made reference to the biblical Joseph, who was given great status by Pharaoh and granted an Egyptian wife (Asenath). Walker proclaimed blacks in America could never be 'a governor, legislator, a senator, a mayor or an attorney at the Bar' and 'Do they not institute laws to prohibit us from marrying among the whites?'[29] The idea of an enslaved black people likened to the Israelites in Walker's thought, further emphasized the severe hardships of black slavery while also condemning the inhumanity and hypocrisy of the white Christian enslavers.

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[28] David.Walker, *David Walker's Appeal*, (Baltimore, Maryland: Black Classic Press 1993), p. 27.
[29] Ibid., 28

Walker insisted that American whites were even more wicked than the Egyptians of antiquity, and did so in theological terms, strategically demanding references from the bible to compare the mistreatment of blacks to the Egyptian treatment of Israelites.

> I call upon the professing Christians, I call
> upon the very tyrant himself, to show me
> a page of history, either sacred or profane
> on which a verse can be found, which maintains
> that the Egyptians heaped the insupportable
> insult upon the children of Israel, by telling
> them that they were not of the human family.
> Can the whites deny this charge? Have they
> not after having reduced us to the deplorable
> condition of slaves under their feet, held us
> up as descending originally from the tribes of
> Monkeys or Orang-Otangs? [30]

Walker's biting accusation concerning the deliberate attempts of whites to strip blacks of their humanity, also introduced his idea which equated white supremacy with satan's challenge of God's sovereignty over creation, concluding that 'they must surely be afflicted with some innate devilishness acting more like devils than accountable men, that they would put themselves in the place of the Creator himself.'[31]

Walker, as would Marcus Garvey much later, also targeted more specifically the hypocrisy of white Christianity. He refused to ignore the deliberate atrocities committed by white Christian slavers and their fellow Christians who were also conscious benefactors. His remarks exposed a truth that many black Christian leaders may have thought, but dared not utter at the time.

> ...But we leave the whites or Europeans as heathens
> and take a view of them as Christians, in which
> capacity we see them as cruel, if not more so then ever.
> In fact take them as a body, they are ten times more

[30] Ibid., 30.
[31] Gayraud Wilmore, *Black religion and Black radicalism,* (Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1972), p. 56.

> cruel, avaricious and unmerciful than ever they were; while they were heathens, they were bad enough it is true; but it is positively a fact that they were not quite so audacious as to go and take vessel loads of men, women and children and in cold blood and through devilishness, throw them into the sea and murder them in all kinds of ways. While they were still heathens they were too ignorant for such barbarity. But being Christians, enlightened and sensible, they are completely prepared for such hellish cruelties.[32]

The radical nature of Walker's religious thought was not without a very critical theological grounding. His views of white Christianity as it was practiced by so many at the time of slavery, was supported by a thoroughly developed critique that looked at the roots of the European use of religion as an instrument and rationale for slavery.

Article III of *Walker's Appeal* titled: *Our Wretchedness in Consequence of the Preachers of the Religion of Jesus Christ*, was aptly named for its thrust at the heart of this white Christian hypocrisy. Walker declared that slave holding and supportive white American Christians were heretics, who falsified the gospel of Jesus Christ to serve their own racist purposes. Walker wrote:

> ...he then, (God) by his apostles handed a dispensation of his, together with the will of Jesus Christ, to the Europeans in Europe, who in open violation of which have made merchandise of us, and it does appear as though they take this very dispensation to aid them in their inferred depredations upon us. Indeed, the way in which religion was and is conducted by the Europeans and their descendants one might believe it was a plan fabricated by themselves and the devils to oppress us.[33]

This same article also expressed apocalyptic themes of prophetic judgments, pending disaster and destruction for white Christians who would not repent for their inhumane oppression of black slaves. Walker proved to be one of the earliest black 'fire and

[32] Walker, *Walker's Appeal*, p. 37
[33] Ibid., 55.

brimstone' styled preachers, who used such rhetoric to radicalize black religious life. By example, Walker's theology highlighted the themes of judgement and repentance as it related to white Christian America who supported and benefited from slavery. Throughout the third article there are several condemnations and calls for repentance in which he demanded white Christians, in the spirit of their religion, to change their ways.

> Perhaps they will laugh at or make of this; But you Americans that unless you speedily after your course, you and your country are gone, For God Almighty will tear up the face of the earth...I hope that the Americans may hear but I am afraid that they have done us so much injury, and are so firm in the belief that our Creator made as to be an inheritance to them forever, that their hearts will harden so that their destruction may be for sure. This language is perhaps too harsh for Americans' delicate ears, But Oh Americans! Oh Americans! I warn you in the name of the Lord to repent and reform or you're ruined.[34]

The radical nature of Walker's religious insights signaled a new stage in the growth and politicization of black Christian thought. The charges leveled against the hypocrisy of many white Christians slaveholders gave way to a militancy that called for self-defense in the name of God. Walker made his ideas of self-defense clear and in religious terms stating:

> ...do not trifle, for they will not trifle you- they want us for their slaves, and think nothing of murdering us in order to subject us to that wretched condition-therefore if there is an attempt made by us kill or be killed...Believe this, it is no more harm for you to kill a man who is trying to kill you, than it is for you take a drink of water when thirsty; in fact, the man who will stand still and let another murder him is worse than an infidel and if he has common sense ought not to be pitied.[35]

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[34] Ibid., 59-60

[35] Herbert Apthekar, *One Continual Cry: David Walker's Appeal*, (New York: Humanities Press. 1965), p. 89.

Walker's publication represented a dramatic shift in black theological discourse and activism. His radical religious ideas relating to the emancipation struggle, ushered in a new current of insurgencies, that involved open rebellion and violence in the black Christian fight for freedom.

Nat Turner

Nat Turner's rebellion exploded almost prophetically some two years later, after the publication of *Walker's Appeal.* In the spirit and sentiment of Walker's articles, the revolt carried out by Turner and his men seemed to fulfill in some ways the religious warnings Walker had alluded to earlier.

Turner is another example in this group of radical theologians, whose approach to the scriptures drew out key elements of the bible especially pertaining to black slaves. Turner was also believed that God of the bible demanded justice and that to know him and his son, Jesus Christ, was to be set free from every power on earth.[36] The central driving force behind Turner as well many other leaders, was the idea that black liberation would come through divinely inspired action.

Turner's theological ideas are important examples of how black theology in the midst of the abolition movement era had been radicalized. The themes of divine wrath and judgment against the 'evil' system and supporters of slavery were central to the views of leaders like Walker and Turner. Turner's ideas however, would expand beyond these to also include certain messianic views of racial redemption.

Turner's confessions to the court appointed lawyer, essentially illustrated his apocalyptic and eschatological visions that were inspired by his own critical

interpretations of various New Testament scripture. Turner's theology dealt particularly with the 'perousia' or catastrophic events of the Messiah's return, and the judgment of humanity. Turner developed a fascinating analogy that directly related the apocalyptic events of the return and judgment of Christ, to his own immediate ideas of armed slave revolt. Turner provides an important view of how black theological interpretations of scripture, strategically related scripture to events or situations faced by blacks, and how prophetic scripture in itself, as in this particular case, can become a catalytic part of a sanctioned action to be enacted by the religiously inspired. For Turner, this would be the interpretive enactment of the apocalyptic drama, by himself and his followers in an armed revolt for freedom.

Turner's confession of the revolt involved a detailed account of the events of apocalyptic struggle, where he saw the Christ figure of judgement and wrath to be the symbolic equivalent to the means of armed confrontation and death of white slave holders by Turner and his men. Turner also viewed the apocalyptic Christ figure as the initiator of human redemption and the Kingdom of peace, that would in this case, ultimately culminate with the freedom for black slaves. These ideas illustrate key interpretive themes found in Turner's own theology. In addition to his theological ideas concerning Christ, Turner's confessions also provide an important view of how he saw himself as a prophet of sorts, with the responsibility of carrying out certain, almost messianic duties.

In his confessions to the white lawyer Thomas Gray, immediately before his trial, Turner spoke of the entire insurrection and his spiritual preparation prior to the events that actually went back to his childhood. In the discourse there were several instances

[36] Wilmore, 89.

where elements of Turner's apocalyptic visions were captured in his descriptive language sounding as graphic as words of some Old Testament prophets.

Turner made references to the early 'signs' that he interpreted to be divine messages predicting the confrontation between the black slaves and the white slaveholders. He also spoke of the voice of what would seem to be God or the Messiah, foretelling the inevitable role that he must play.

> About this time I had a vision and I saw white spirits
> and Black spirits engaged in battle and the Sun darkened
> the thunder rolled in the Heavens and blood flowed in streams-
> And I heard a voice saying: 'Such is your luck, such you are
> called to see, and let it come rough or smooth you must surly
> bear it...[37]

This particular vision alluded to the revolt, whose plans had not yet begun to materialize, but its invocation was foreseen. An interesting aspect of this vision is Turner's reference to the darkening of the sun was later identified to be an eclipse that occurred that year, which in turn, became his deciding sign to act. Turner would look to other natural signs as well, showing a re-occurring pattern in his theology that attached prophetic meaning to his physical environment. On another occasion Turner spoke of even more signs that instigated him to act

> ...while laboring in the field, I discovered drops of
> blood on the corn as though it were dew from heaven
> I communicated it to many, both white and black, in the
> neighborhood and I then found on the leaves in the woods
> hieroglyphic characters and numbers...[38]

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[37] Thomas Frazier, ed. *Afro-American History: Primary Sources*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc. 1970), pp. 66-67.
[38] Ibid.,

The strong symbolism of divine revelation through nature should not be ignored, as it reflected parallels of natural signs revealed to biblical prophets and figures. Such stories most likely had a heavy influence Turner's religious thoughts and experiences.

Turner's visions for rebellion related to a few different concepts and passages found in the New Testament. The gospels and the book of Revelation dealing with apocalyptic prophecy provide broader scriptural contexts by which his intense visions at the time can be better understood. In particular are some passages from the twelfth chapter of the book of Luke that seem to correlate with some of the themes Turner would allude to, concerning the unknown second coming of Jesus and the wrath that shall come with his arrival. The following passage from the book of Luke emphasizes the violent nature and purpose of Christ's return, which Turner would symbolically relate to his own mission for liberation.

> Be ready and keep your lamps burning...you too
> must stand as ready because the Son of man is
> coming at an hour you do not expect...
> I have come to bring fire to the earth and how
> I wish it were blazing already...Do you suppose
> I am here to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you,
> but rather division...

This Lucan passage brings to light Turner's theological ideas, which saw the advent of the messianic kingdom that was to come as the symbolic redemption and emancipation of the black slaves that would be ushered in, not by peace, but by the wrath of judgment. Interestingly, Turner, perhaps, saw himself as playing a role in the wrath of judgement based on his own interpretation of scripture as he related it to the armed revolt for freedom.

Turner made more direct referrals to the events of the messianic drama, where he implied that the Savior, Christ, actually delegated certain messianic responsibilities to him to fulfill. He described his mandate in the following

> ...and now the HolyGhost had revealed itself to me and made plain the miracles it had shown me- For as the Blood of Christ had been shed on earth and had ascended to heaven for the salvation of sinners, and was now returning to earth again in the form of dew - and as the leaves on the trees bore the impression of the figures I had seen in the heaven's, it was plain to me that the Savior was about to lay down the yoke he had borne for the sins of men and the great day of judgment was at hand...and on the twelfth of May 1828, I heard a loud noise in the heavens, and the spirit instantly appeared to me and said the Serpent was loosed and Christ had laid down the yoke he had borne for the sins of men, and that I should take it on and fight against the Serpent for the time was fast approaching when the first shall be last and the last shall be first...[39]

When asked by the lawyer if he felt his acts were a mistake, Turner replied with conviction relating his cause and duties to the likes of Christ

> ...was not Christ crucified? And by the signs in the heavens that it would make known to me when I should commence the great work- and until the first appeared, I should conceal it from the knowledge of men and on the appearance of the sign (the eclipse of the sun that February) I should rise and prepare myself and slay my enemies with their own weapons...[40]

Two other aspects of Turner's confessions also reflect significant expressions of the apocalyptic nature of the insurrection. The first deals specifically with the weapon of choice Turner actually used in the attacks, symbolizing the messianic attributes Turner

[39] Ibid., 66-68.
[40] Ibid., 68

displayed in his enactment of the apocalypse. Here Turner refers to the sword he carried symbolically as one might find in the passages of the Book of Revelations:

> I took Mrs. Newsome by the hand and with the sword
> I had when I was apprehended, I struck her several blows
> over the head...[41]

His sword here, stands out symbolically as his comrades were said to be armed with hatchets, axes, knives and guns. Turner however, is seen as a messianic-like general wielding a sword of judgment. The depiction of the sword as a symbol of war and judgment was popularized in the book of Revelation chapter 6 verse 4 an allusion to an angelic figure also mandated with the duty to 'take away peace from the earth and set people killing each other. He was given a huge sword'. Apocalyptic passages such as these naturally appealed to the religiously inspired Turner, who in some ways appeared to be literally enacting or re-enacting biblical prophecy and the messianic drama as he saw it.

An intriguing detail that adds to the apocalyptic aura surrounding Turner's revolt, involved the actual geographical names of the Southhampton county area in Virginia where the revolt took place. In particular is the town called Jerusalem, (now called Courtland) that served as the county seat. Some suggest the city, as the legal and military center, had been considered to be a key target for the rebels to overtake for weapons and ammunition to advance the revolt in the region. The literal significance of the city of Jerusalem posed within the scope of Turner's vision for emancipation, was the advent of the messianic kingdom offers an early example of black eschatology concerned with racial redemption destiny. Turner's city of Jerusalem shined as a strategic goal for

[41] Ibid., 69.

advancing the uprising, but eventually became the home of his execution as well. Turner's very locality seems to have spoken directly to his apocalyptic rationale for the revolt, making his divinely inspired struggle seemingly all the more real.

The radical nature of the Turner revolt marked a new era of black theological activism. It was an era that was becoming more and more inspired by the apocalyptic views of leaders like Turner, who saw the militant struggle against slavery to be a religious duty. The revolt, illustrated one of the earliest testaments of religiously sanctioned armed struggle against slavery.

Religious Revolts in Jamaica

Rebellious activities spurred by the black Christian militants like those of Walker and Turner were not isolated to America alone. As was stated earlier, such religiously inspired revolts had been broiling for sometime and began to surface in Jamaica prior to and around this same time as well.

Slave revolts in Jamaica had been persistently occurring as early as the 1600's. One of the first recorded uprisings happened in the parish of St. Ann's around 1673, where some two hundred slaves escaped to the hills. This was followed by a rebellion at Caymanas near Spanish Town in 1678. In 1685 another occurrence took place involving some one hundred and fifty slaves from four plantations in the Guenaboa Vale area of St. Catherine. Again in 1690 a large majority of slaves estimated at five hundred, organized at Sutton's plantation in Clarenden where they were suppressed, while one hundred and

fifty rebels escaped into the mountains and joined a larger growing posse of escaped slaves who eventually became identified as the Maroons.[42]

The Maroons can be identified as the forerunners of successful rebellions by achieving the goal of freedom through their more militant actions. Known for their superior fighting skills and tactics, the Maroons established themselves as one of the only free and independent black communities in the western hemisphere before the Haitian revolution. The Maroon War of 1729, which lasted ten years ending with the Maroon Treaties of 1739, made the Maroons a sign to the racist British and American slaveholders that the potential for violent slave revolts on a large scale could be severely costly. The Maroon war also contributed to the growing consciousness for rebellion among the slaves. More incidents with the Maroons would arise again around 1765 in St. Mary, then again in 1766 and 1777 in Westmoreland and Hanover. These rebellions led up to the second Maroon War in 1795. Prior to these dates, Jamaica witnessed the Tacky slave rebellion of 1760, which took place on Easter Monday, following the religious rituals of Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Led by a slave named Tacky, from a set of Africans known as Karamant this insurrection began in St. Mary and spread to estates in Westmoreland. The movement was also said to have called for uprisings in St. Catherine as well as St. Thomas, Clarendon, Kingston and St. James. The rebellion was finally suppressed on October 12, 1761. All of these revolts occurring before 1800, created a revolutionary atmosphere in which future revolts would explode in Jamaica's anti-slavery and race advancement movements.

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[42] Richard Hart, *Black Jamaican's Struggle Against Slavery*, (Kingston, Jamaica: Institute of Jamaica, 1977), p. 6.

By the mid 1830's the emergence of militant black Christian rhetoric became the central organizing factor for two of the island's largest revolts led by Sam Sharpe in 1831, and the Morant Bay revolt led by Paul Bogle in 1865. Both of these insurrections represented the growing trend of radical theological activism and political leadership within the black abolitionist cause, that paralleled similar religious revolts in America.

Sam Sharpe

What has been referred to as the Christmas Rebellion or Baptist War of 1831 was organized and led by Sam Sharpe, a central religious leader in the Western parishes from Montego Bay. Based in the Baptist church, Sharpe's roots were in the Native Baptist tradition where he was championed as 'daddy' or ruler. Sharpe was a highly intelligent man, a master of oratory and a dynamic preacher who convincingly articulated the religious and political needs of the oppressed black slaves of his time.

Sharpe's stance against slavery and his principles by which he organized the basis of the revolt were essentially religious and uncompromising. He proclaimed the common sentiment of many liberation preachers, which addressed the evils and injustice of slavery. He believed and preached the natural equality of man and denied that the white man had anymore right to hold the blacks in bondage than the blacks had to enslave whites.[43] Such fundamental theological views formed the religious basis for his broader anti-slavery activity, which eventually exploded in the rebellion.

There were several factors that contributed to the rebellion of 1831 which were common ingredients found in other slave revolts. Factors such as growing political

[43] Henry Bleby, *Death Struggles of Slavery*, (London : Hamilton Adams and Co. 1853), 110.

excitement stirred by rumors of emancipation, economic stress, as well as revolutionary philosophy circulated among slaves.[44]

To begin, there was a growing political excitement at the time, derived from the campaign for the immediate abolition of slavery launched in the British House of Commons in April 1831. Shortly there after, the word had penetrated the slave communities and the notions of pending freedom heightened slave expectations and created a restlessness that the white authorities and slave-holders feared the most. Sam Sharpe, being the literate and politically connected preacher, was a key communicator who caught wind of these current political developments and was responsible for relaying the message and its meaning to his fellow slaves.

In the testimony of Edward Hylton, one of the original rebellion organizers, it was explained to Henry Bleby, an English investigator, how Sharpe had 'told them a great deal of what he had read both in the English and colonial newspapers showing that both the king and the English people wished the Negroes to be emancipated, and expressed his belief that the freepapers had already been sent out, and that the only obstacles which they had to overcome in order to secure their freedom were the obstinacy and selfishness of planters'.[45]

The resistance to the pending emancipation was also prevalent amongst the Island's authorities. One example of white resistance is seen with the governor Earl of Belmore, who in full knowledge of the emancipation petition, made no effort to publish the royal proclamation until December. This raised suspicions of a conspiracy amongst the whites of Jamaica who protested the abolition. Word had spread that fearful whites

[44] Mary Reckford. "The Slave Rebellion of 1831" *Jamaican Journal* 3 (Kingston: Institute of Jamaica 1969): 25.

were making plans to set up a new governing body, independent of the Crown that would consist of delegates from parish meetings. Although there were no immediate actions taking on these notions, the possibilities of such developments did reach the likes of Sam Sharpe.

Another white leader connected to this conspiracy was the St. James parish magistrate and attorney James Grigmon. Grigmon's stance against slavery was made quite plain in his declaration:

> The king is going to give black people freedom: But he hopes that all his friends will be of his mind and spill our blood first.[46]

Such comments were followed by even more rumors claiming that whites in the House of Assembly were planning to 'keep the women and children in slavery, while they took out men and shoot them like pigeons.'[47] The growing white resistance threatening the lives of slaves invoked the militancy in the likes of Sharpe and others. Sharpe's own militancy became equally pronounced in his warnings that 'if blacks did not stand up for themselves and take their freedom they would be killed.'[48]

Henry Bleby, a Wesleyan missionary and the principle investigator of the revolt, had several conversations with Sharpe and his comrades. Bleby personally believed that Sharpe did not plan armed rebellion, but rather a mass passive resistance. The plan as understood by Bleby, was for the slaves to sit down and refuse to work the days following Christmas. Bleby's account however may not be telling the complete story.

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[45] Bleby, 111.
[46] Reckford, 26.
[47] Ibid, 26.
[48] Ibid.

Although it had been noted in his correspondence with Sharpe that, 'the burning of the plantations and the violence offered to the whites, were no part of his design,' what did happen in terms of the revolt had always been possibility. [49] Bleby was convinced that the insurrection was 'planned by one, and that individual himself Samuel Sharpe, was the man whose active brain devised the project and he had sufficient authority with those around him to carry it into effect, having acquired an extraordinary degree of influence amongst his fellow slaves'.[50]

Bleby's interpretation of the events however contradict the confessions of Colonel Robert Gardner, who was one of two key military leaders in the rebellion with Sharpe. Gardner claimed that Sharpe himself planned the armed rebellion and timed it for Christmas so that with the whites away in towns, the slaves could easily collect arms from the estates. In light of Gardner's statements, Sharpe's plan was not the passive resistance as alluded to by Bleby. In fact Sharpe himself had organized Gardner and Thomas Dove as key leaders in the revolt, who happened to take on the military titles: Colonel Gardner and Captain Dove. Other militant aspects of Sharp's plan is also evident in his language as he referred to the possibility that 'whites would try to intimidate the strikers by shooting hostages as examples'. Sharpe was quoted as saying: '...if the Buckra (whiteman) would pay them, they would work as before; but if any attempt was made to force them to work as slaves, then they would fight for their freedom.'[51]

Sharpe also implied that 'probably a few would be punished and perhaps put to death; and he for one was prepared to die rather than continue in slavery.'[52] Sharpe's

[49] Bleby, 113.
[50] Ibid., 115.
[51] Ibid., 112.
[52] Ibid., 113

statements here articulate the far more militant stance than what is portrayed in Bleby's account.

In the book: *The Slave Rebellion in the Great River Valley of St. James, 1831-32,* author Kamau Brathwaite referred to the revolt's broad ranging involvement moving beyond the idea of a soley singular leadership of the movement, suggesting:

> ...the image of the single head: Gorgan, Cyclops,Le Rai, Soleil, Casper, Czar, Napoleon, is an icon of mercantilist Europe; one whose parts was monopolistic plantation. For the polytheistic, polygamous, polyrythmical enslaved Africans, it had to be more Sphinx, more Kapo, more prismatic possibility: a plural leadership. So that within the polygraph of the Great River Valley and its environ vibrations to Lucea, Sav to Falmouth, Maroon Town, Black River there was a crump within the crumple of the plans that quite confused the Commentators.[53]

In this sense the revolt can be seen in the full dimensions by which the events actually took place. The burning, killing and destruction of property, while not directly stated to the concerned white investigators as 'the plan', were essentially the by-products of the black religiously inspired attempts for freedom.

The underlying militancy of the revolt is even more evident in the para-military aspects of the revolt, under the leadership of Col. Gardner and Captain Dove as described by a British officer:

> "It was astonishing to observe", observed a British military officer who fought against Gardner and Dove, "what sagacity had been displayed by these beings in the selection of their positions...as they invariably availed themselves of such as commanded a full view of the hostile approaches and a secure but concealed retreat for themselves, with a supply of water and ground provisions: invariably constructing impediments to each entrance. In this case their headquarters possessed every advantage, with the addition of its being on a hill, within gunshot of the roads to Montego Bay...[54]

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[53] Edward Kamau-Brathwaite, "The Slave Rebellion in the Great River Valley of St. James. 1831-32" *Jamaica Historical Review* 13, (1982): 15.
[54] Ibid., 16.

The militant nature of Sharpe's plan was situated within his larger theological vision for freedom. As was mentioned earlier, Sharpe's role and position as a preacher in the community based his cause for freedom in his faith, and the events that were to take place were the manifestations of his liberation theology. The prominent role that religion played in the larger scheme is not only seen in the communal networking, where the rebels were linking in 'prayer meetings' throughout Baptist homes or chapels to organize themselves, but it is also seen in the highly significant role that the Baptist faith played in confirming the rebels' sworn commitment to cause, through the symbolic oaths of secrecy that were sealed with the 'kissing of the book' as well. That particular 'book' was the bible. Bleby spoke of the oath swearing claiming:

> ...the whole party bound themselves by oath not to work after Christmas as slaves, but to assert their claim to freedom , and to be faithful to each other...[55]

Bleby described how Sharpe was the first to kiss the book, and all the rest followed his example. The gesture of kissing the bible to seal commitment to the cause, indicates the central role of religion in the whole enterprise, reflecting all the more Sharpe's particular theology at work as the basis of the revolt.

Another important parallel found between Sam Sharpe's rebellion and Nat Turner's, deals with the timing of the events. Sharpe's rebellion was only four months after Turner's. Although geographically distant, the militant sentiment amongst certain preachers indeed created an apocalyptic atmosphere in the struggle for freedom, identifying the strong similarities amongst these religious inspired revolts.

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[55] Bleby, 112.

One Baptist missionary named Conford, regarded Sharpe in a prophetic light, proclaiming that Sharpe led a 'Holy Protest... 'the passion burned only in the fire of Holy principle...You cannot sever them. They brighten and burn in equal brilliance and immortal flames.' [56]

An eye witness to Sharpe's execution, who was according to Conford, extremely curious about the affect of the religion in reference to such a death, provided this testimony:

> With a clear voice he told them he was going to
> die because he had thought they had a right to be
> free. He protested his innocence of every outrage
> and wrong. He professed his firm faith in the atoning
> blood of Jesus, and his hope for eternal life; whilst
> his closing words about the coming rain from heaven
> were interpreted by many as prophetic signs of freedom
> to come and so he doubtless meant them.[57]

The reference to the prophetic vision of the coming rains, that symbolized freedom, echoes the rhetoric of Nat Turner who, only months earlier, also predicted such atmospheric signs as the cues of redemption.

Turner had confessed:

> I see sir you doubt my words, but can you not
> think the same ideas and strange appearances
> about this time in the heavens, might prompt
> others as well as myself to this undertaking...[58]

Turner's words, like Sharpe's, appear apocalyptic and even eschatological in terms of their visions of a divine intervention for the ending of the slave age, and the coming forth of the emancipation age. Such language relating to providence was common throughout

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[56] Robert Stewart, *Religion and Society in Post Emancipation Jamaica,* (Knoxville: The University of Tennesse Press, 1992), p. 150.
[57] Ibid., 151.
[58] Frazier, 73.

the bible, especially in Old Testament stories of the divine struggle of the ancient Israelites for freedom. The same religiosity in the struggle of antiquity, is seen re-emerging through the spirited black Christian leadership in the slave era. Sharpe's religiously inspired actions reflect the deeper theological sentiments of the era's urgent militancy for freedom, that was championed more and more often by slave preachers who had tied the Christian faith to the physical struggle against slavery.

Paul Bogle

Between 1831, the year of Turner's and Sharpe's Christmas rebellion, and 1865, several different events took place on the Jamaican socio-political landscape, which made the conditions conducive for one of Jamaica's largest and fiercest rebellions ever. Paul Bogle, was another militant Native Baptist preacher, who was heralded as the leader of the Morant Bay rebellion of 1865.

The socio-political and economic climate canvassing the periods which led up to the 1865 rebellion had really been broiling since Jamaican emancipation in 1834. The economic transitions that took place in the legal dismantling of the institution of slavery, brought new tensions into the political arena. New stratums of power were being negotiated now between former masters and slaves. Planters were now faced with a newly empowered free black population, who were seeking to make the most of their freedom through economic independence and land claims. Problems arose over several issues concerning land use, labor and political rights. The majority of the ex-slaves ended up as highly exploited tenants still at the mercy of the planters. Trapped on plantations for lack of complete economic independence, the free blacks were still being over worked

and underpaid, thus making it even harder to establish a self-reliant foothold in the larger Jamaican economic world.

For the white ruling class of politicians and planters dominance over the black masses was taken to another level, as they faced this transition from slavery to a more 'capitalistic free market'. Measures were taken legislatively through the 'Act for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Colonies' and the local Jamaican 'Act for the Abolition of Slavery in the Island', that considered compensation, rewarding planters rather than the slaves for the ending of slave labor. The new policy rationalized a gradualist approach of black freedom, suggesting that what was needed was a long 'apprenticeship period whose main objectives were to preserve the plantation system and to deny the blacks access to land'.[59] Such political attitude and orchestrating instigated the political activism of newly freed seeking land, and social justice for themselves as free people.

Since slavery, some lands that were formally plantations became available accompanied with already existing lands never used. At some point blacks began leaving the plantations to claim plots of their own, arguing that 'crown lands' were available to all crown subjects. In order to prevent black land ownership, Lord Glenelg, Secretary of State, set out policy to deny blacks land by means of disposing of large land parcels at high 'upset prices' to place them out of reach of blacks who had little or no capital.

Along with the demands for land, blacks in the 1840's also pressured for the right to vote. Blacks were keenly aware of the need for land in order to be politically empowered with the right to vote. White authorities scrambling to maintain a threshold

[59] Don Robotham, " The Notorious Riot: The Socio-Economic and Political Base of Paul Bogle's Revolt", (Ph. D., diss., Jamaica: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1981), 28.

on their power now challenged power, had reacted to the mounting demands, with the Franchise Act of 1840 that declared in order to become qualified to vote one had to either own land to the value of L6; pay or receive rent on real estate of L50 or pay L3 in direct taxes.[60] The Act was clearly designed to disenfranchise the majority black population from its voting powers, further ensuring the continuation of white supremacist rule in Jamaican society.

From 1852 to 1865 new taxes on voters reduced the number of voters at the same time opening the vote up to a larger number of the wealthy, allowing them to continue to control the political and economic scene.

Along with the land and political disputes came labor problems in terms of wages and available work. By the 1840's low wages and unemployment began to complicate black freedom even more, rising greatly as the sugar industry declined. The planters reacted to the suffering market conditions by increasing the rate of taxes on the already poor black population. Taxes on clothes increased by 1,150 percent; between 1840 and 1862. Taxes on salt fish went up by 366 percent. Taxes on donkeys and horses owned by people went up 1,580 and 1,220 percent.[61]

In reaction to these problems came more social unrest from the oppressed black masses. After 1837 there were several revolts and riot conspiracies. Rumors of re-enslavement sparked two uprisings in 1839 and 1848. Two other rebellions took place in 1859, the first came in concern about the toll gates and the increased road taxes.
The other incident of this same year was a land dispute between a colored man and a white aunt over ownership of a family estate near Falmouth.

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[60] Ibid., 38.
[61] Ibid., 42.

All of these issues and tensions came to a head in 1865, a year reflective of economic and social turmoil as well as natural events. Compounding the already existing problems was a series of plagues including cholera, small pox, a major flood followed by a drought that hit the Jamaican population hard. All of these conditions rested upon the already existing strains of the American Civil War, which had a great affect on the prices of U.S. imports that had become a large part of the Jamaican economy. Out of this intensified setting the Morant Bay rebellion exploded.

The revolt was led by Paul Bogle, a powerful Native Baptist spiritual leader among the free village communities. He along with many other blacks of Stoney Gut, were occupying land of former plantations, of which they were required to pay rent. However, Bogle and these blacks took a political stance and refused to pay rent on grounds that the abandoned lands belonged to the Queen, and blacks as subjects of the crown had rights to them. The claim for land led by Bogle became the catalyst that sparked the initial outbreak.

It was a court case concerning a trespass charge against a Stony Gut resident by a colored landowner that brought to the forefront the much deeper problem of rightful land ownership. This case would lead to the disturbances at the Morant Bay court house on Saturday October 7, 1865. That Monday, October 9, warrants were issued for the arrest of Bogle and his brother Moses in connection with the disturbances at the courthouse. The following day police came for Bogle only to be confronted by a prepared battalion of some 300 to 400 men, armed with cutlasses, sticks and pikes. The police were overtaken and beaten, only to be warned by Bogle that they would come to the bay the next day for the vestry meeting.

The rebellion was by no means a completely spontaneous act of defiance, but actually represented the first stages of a planned revolt that had been plotted months before. As a preacher, Bogle had been utilizing his chapel and prayer meetings, much like Samuel Sharpe, to recruit potential comrades for the rebellion. It is thought that Bogle could have been planning the revolt up to six months prior, not long after his ordination as deacon, by the radical mulatto and political ally George William Gordon. There had been a religious and political alliance cemented between these two men, both in battles against the entrenched plantocracies still dominating the parishes. Religion again became the vehicle by which mass black political action was mobilized. The reoccurring role that religion played, serving as the foundation of the resistance helped to rationalize the moral authority of the rebellion itself. Within Bogle's recruitment meetings, which often took place in the Native Baptist churches, certain oath swearing allegiance and secrecy were sealed with the kissing of the bible. This is another symbolic act found during Sharpe's rebellion.

Bogle's theology identified this race struggle as a religious cause. Certain theological undercurrents are seen in the language of Bogle in his letters to Gordon concerning the consolidation of their mutual political support in the struggle.
Bogle implied the themes of sacrifice and persecution in the current cause as he addressed Gordon:

> All our hearts are hurt to hear the way
> you are treated for our cause. But in
> suffering their are conciliation, for there
> is rest provided for those who toil and
> bear persecution for truth's sake in heaven.[62]

[62] Gad Herman, *The Killing Time: The Morant Bay Rebellion*, (London: MacMillin Press, 1994), p. 65.

The political alliance between Bogle's movement and Gordon was to be further solidified through symbolic activities of baptism, in which Bogle had summoned Gordon to come to Stony Gut. Of the scarce writings by Bogle, these few correspondences between the two leaders reflect the deeper theological ideas of Bogle. In this case Bogle called Gordon forward for this most significant occasion of baptism, which again symbolized the religious commitment to the cause, similar to the kissing of the bible.

> We want to see you in our village...for
> we have plans to arrange with you. Come
> up we beseech you as quick as possible,
> so that we may arrange how the baptism
> is to go on at Spring. [63]

In another letter to Gordon, Bogle further elaborated on his stance that his cause was religious, as he indicated that the rewards of progress was to be granted by God in the religious world. Such allusions indicate how even Bogle's political world view was essentially based on his theological ideology.

> At a meeting held at the liberal School Society
> meeting house at the above named place.(Stony Gut)
> to take into consideration what plans we might adopt
> for to recover your place that is lost in the political
> world but in the religious one we are assured your
> progress is great may God grant it so...[64]

Although little has been preserved relating to full speeches or sermons by Bogle, references like those above, reveal the predominant religious overtones that accent his reasoning and movement organizing. Similar to Sharpe, Bogle's theology can be more broadly understood in his social actions as a preacher. He served as a religious

[63] Robotham. 84.
[64] Ibid.

spokesman and leader for the fight against oppression, which placed him in the line of liberation preachers and religious activist that preceded him.

On the day of the rebellion, Bogle and his men took over the Morant Bay courthouse, burning it to the ground and assassinating many of the authorities at the meeting. In the days that followed the rebellion spread quickly throughout the Morant Plantain River Valley. The widespread movement was in part made possible by the tight network of Native Baptists and others throughout the region who had heeded Bogle's call.

It was from within the churches that the call 'color for color' resonated, as Bogle preached a militant message for justice that summed the spirit of the revolt. A quote best capturing Bogle's rallying cry was the hail to the black masses:

> It is now time for us to help ourselves-
> skin for skin. The iron bar is now
> broken in this parish. The white people
> send a proclamation to the Governor
> to make war against which we all must put our
> shoulders to the wheels and pull together.
> The Maroons sent their proclamation to us
> to meet them at Hayfield at once without delay;
> that they will put us in the way how to act.
> Every one of your must leave your house.
> Take your guns; who don't have guns take
> your cutlasses down at once. Come over
> to Stony Gut that we might march over to meet
> Maroons at once without delay. Blow your shells
> roal your drums house to house to house.
> Take out every man, march them to Stony Gut and
> (them) that you find in the way takes them up, takes them
> down with their arms. War is at us, my black skin.
> War is at hand.[65]

[65] Thomas Holt, *The Problem of Freedom, Race Labor and Politics in Jamaica and Britain 1832-1938.* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press. 1992), p. 262.

The nature of the Morant Bay Rebellion reached apocalyptic proportions, in death and destruction and is understood to be a religiously led political revolt, further demonstrating the growth of militant Christian activism throughout the West Indies and America.

The parallels of religious militancy found throughout these four radical religious leaders, would also be seen later emerging in Garvey's theology. Garvey himself exhibited a forms of militancy to a great extent as well.

Although Garvey did not instigate open revolt or rebellions, essential units within the U.N.I.A. organization demonstrated his own style of militancy. The 'African Legion' was the official paramilitary arm of the organization, staffed and arranged by military standards, that included officers of rank and basic military training regiments and corps. He understood the reality of the black situation in terms of the need for self-defense in a racially hostile world and promoted his militant rationale in religious terms, stating:

> Always be prepared for the exhibition
> of the vilest passions of men in war. Man
> has always warred against his fellow man.
> It started with Cain and Abel and has continued
> down through the ages...Therefore, in
> time of peace, prepare for war, so as not to
> be caught unprepared by your enemy...[66]

Garvey regarded God as a God of war, adding a somewhat militant dimension to his views about the nature of God:

> God is a bold Sovereign- A Warrior Lord.
> The God we worship and adore is a God
> of War as well as peace. He does not allow
> anything to interfere with his power and
> authority.[67]

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[66] Robert Hill, ed., *Marcus Garvey: Life and Lessons* (Berkeley: University of California Press: 1987), p. 293.

Garvey in the sense of a militant Christian thinker, quite often referred to the noble struggles of his fellow countrymen Sharpe and Bogle in his speeches to Jamaica followers. His religious ideas revealed certain attributes of the liberation oriented theologies of these more militant black Christian leaders long before him.

In the aftermath of this militant era of slave revolts and political rebellions, black theological ideas began to include themes of black nationalism and repatriation introduced by early Pan African oriented theologians led by the likes of Alexander Crummel and Edward Blyden.

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[67] Tony Martin, ed., *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*, (Boston: Majority Press, 1986), p. 44.

Chapter 3:

Alexander Crummel and Edward Blyden: Black Nationalist and Pan African Theologians of the 19th Century

The militant theological activities that developed in the religious struggle against slavery forecasted more universal ideas of black racial solidarity and liberation that emerged amongst black Christian leaders in the west during the nineteenth century. A part of this can perhaps be attributed to a growing awareness of common experiences found between these once isolated black freedom fighting communities. As was evidenced earlier, many of the rebellions throughout the 1800's in the Americas and the Caribbean occurred in close proximity to each other time wise, indicating how the period had become an era of rebellious consciousness, that in many ways had been inspired by the burgeoning the black Christian theologies of the day.

Ideas of divine providence, racial salvation, racial destiny, as well as emphasis on affirmation of African culture, self-determination, and the redemption of Africa and the African race became the important themes among a new school of black nationalist and Pan African oriented theologians. Alexander Crummel and Edward Blyden are two key personalities who incorporated several of these ideas into their own theologies and hermeneutics that were concerned with racial advancement and religious redemption.

Both theologians emerged onto a religious and political scene that had a backdrop of widespread ideas of black independence and nationhood that had been growing more prevalent by the 1850's and 60's. Ideas of racial self-determination and nationhood had become more pronounced after emancipation, as many blacks had grown politically and

socially dissatisfied with the hollow promises of justice and equality implied by their newly found freedom.

Politicized black-nationalist thought, which Crummel and Blyden became distinctive contributors, in some cases carried over religious themes. Ideas of racial unity through religious destiny, as well as inspired visions for an exodus to Africa, were expressed through organized efforts for racial repatriation. More than ever, black theologians as preachers began drawing on passages like the Psalm 63 that spoke of 'Ethiopia stretching forth her hands unto God', as a race unifying and divine call for universal black nationhood. The various ideologies of Black Nationalism enjoyed unprecedented growth during this time period, encompassing diverse views concerning racial advancement championed by numerous black, political and religious leaders. Of special significance, are the theological ideas of Crummel and Blyden, who espoused a particular religious nationalism that distinguished another important phase in the developing traditions of black theology.

Alexander Crummel

Alexander Crummel differed in many ways from the likes of the more militant theologians that preceded him, who incited open rebellion as a means for liberation. Yet, at the same time he held many theological concepts in common with them in terms of racial destiny. Crummel's theology however, unmistakably reflected his academic religious training that was unique amongst black Christian leaders prior to him.

As a free black in New York city, Crummel was exposed to the best sources of education available to blacks at that time, attending the African Free School in New

York. When it became time for his more formal study, Crummel set out with the well known Henry Highland Garnet a childhood friend, to the Noyse Academy in New Hampshire. The academy was established in 1835 by white abolitionists who made it open to both blacks and whites. Arriving in the spring of that same year, the locals of area found the two students to be too radical and drove them out of town later in the summer. Crummel then left for Oneida upon his return, joining the sophomore class of 1836. In 1838 Crummel in pursuit of Holy orders, sought recognition into the Episcopalian Priesthood. He, however, did not become ordained until 1844, after which he went on to Cambridge, England to study at Queens College where he later graduated in 1853. Afforded with such a prestigious educational background as this, Crummel represented a different class of theologians who were formally trained in academic religious settings, and were integrally involved in the struggle for racial emancipation and advancement.

Crummel's theology addressed several important aspects of the black religious and socio-political experience and needs of the times. Echoing the rhetoric of the militant theologians like Walker, prior to him, Crummel also articulated common parallels made between the enslaved and oppressed blacks' struggles of his time with the tribulations of the ancient Israelites. This analogy formed an important basis for his ideas about divine providence and his own unique theological rationale for slavery and later status of oppression. In Crummel's theology slavery and oppression were divinely sanctioned in order to force the black race to 'discipline themselves' about freedom and move towards what he termed 'self-salvation'. The ideas of racial self-salvation foreshadowed similar ideas that would be seen later in Garvey's theology.

Self-salvation for Crummel involved instilling principles of racial self-determination and self-reliance into the religious terms of Christian duty. Crummel's theology also included the ideas of emigration to and the redemption of Africa and her people, further illustrating how his broader theological visions for a universal racial salvation had became tied to the popularized ideas of repatriation at the time. Much of Crummel's hermeneutics involved the juxtaposition of the Israelite bondage and redemption sagas with the enslaved African experiences.

In 1877, Crummel wrote a Thanksgiving discourse that highlighted his style of hermeneutics. The passage elaborated on was from the book of Isaiah 41:7 which read: 'For your shame you shall have double and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion.'[68] Crummel interpreted this in terms of the 'divine government' of God, bringing utter destruction and shame to the wicked, signifying a 'hopeless confusion' as it related to the conditions of black oppression. Crummel attached a deeper meaning to this passage, suggesting that this act of God towards the black race resembled the forbearance and mercy of God through providence.

Crummel's hermeneutics described the race's trial and punishment of slavery as a condition to correct and purify the race rather than to destroy it. To this Crummel reasoned on Isaiah:

> The allusion is supposed to refer to the Jews after their restoration and the passage is regarded as teaching that for all their long continued servitude and suffering God, in the end, would make the abundant recompense. Great shame and reproach he had given them through long centuries; But now when discipline and trial had corrected and purified them, he promises them double

[68] Wilson J. Moses, *Destiny and Race: Selected Writings of Alexander Crummel 1840-1898*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), p. 194.

> honor and reward...The text opens before us some interesting features of God's dealing with nations; by light which many, perchance, somewhat determining the destiny of the race with which we are connected. My purpose is to attempt, this morning an investigation of God's disciplining and retributive economy in races and nations, with the hope of arriving at some clear conclusions concerning the destiny of the Negro race.[69]

This quote outlines key aspects of Crummel's theology concerning the religiously inspired efforts for racial unity and destiny. Crummel's nationalist push for advancement revolved around such religious ideas. The nationalist concept of a racial nation was central to Crummel's theology as he discussed the merciful aspect of God's economy bestowed on a nation:

> The almighty seizes upon a superior nation, and by mingled chastisements and blessing gradually leads them on to greatness...Probation, that is as designed to teach self-restraint and to carry on improvement is imposed upon them, as well as individuals.[70]

Crummel supported his concepts of God's providence with various Old Testament passages that provided analogies relating to the divine schooling of the black race through God's disciplinary trials. He saw God's restorative discipline as the active intervention of divine guidance, and referred to specific scriptural passages like Psalm 18, mentioned in his point about God's principles of governance with the race.

> With the merciful you will show yourself merciful; with an upright man you will show yourself upright; with the pure you will show yourself pure...These words show the principles by which God carries on his government...[71]

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[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.,196.
[71] Ibid., 197.

Crummel implied what he believed was the religious duty of the race to God, in devotion and service, that was required in exchange for divine governance. Crummel's hermeneutics consistently referred to other important Old Testament analogies that related to his concerns for the providence of God and the black race.

In another case he used the story of Noah as an example to show the purpose of disciplinary trials for the training and preservation of a people and the special establishment of a covenant that would symbolize similar commitments God would make with the black race.

> ... the providence of God intervenes for the training and preservation of such peoples. Thus we read in Genesis that because of man's universal wickedness, that it repulsed the Lord that he made man; but immediately it says that he approved, " just Noah, and entered into covenant with him" ...to these germinal roots God brought the discipline of trial; and by then, through this one man educated up a people who, despite their faults, shed forth the clearest religious light of almighty God.[72]

Crummel related his ideas of disciplinary trials through providence to another important concept within his theology that focused on the inherent racial potentials that were drawn out of the race in the struggle for self-preservation. He expressed a profound admiration for the race's abilities in all social areas and enterprise for survival:

> ...whenever the Negro family has been in a servile position, however severe may have been their condition, without one single exception their native capacity has always glinted forth, amid the storm- preserving the captive exiles of Africa from utter annihilation; stimulating them to enterprise and aspiration; and in every case producing men who have shown respectable talent

[72] Ibid., 198.

> as mechanics and artisans, as soldiers in armies; as citizens of great commonwealths, not infrequently as artists; not seldom as scholars, frequently as ministers of the Gospel, and at times as scientific men and men of letters.[73]

In like tradition with many other black nationalist leaders, Crummel himself, went to great extents to publicize the resilience and perseverance of the race as evidence of the capability of the race to achieve social independence and self-determination. Crummel was convinced that blacks were unconquerable no matter the circumstances, believing 'God did not bring the black race through the wilderness of disasters for nothing, but to elevate the Negro to success.'[74]

> Nothing, believe me, on earth, nothing brought from perdition, can keep back this destined advanced of the Negro race. No conspiracies of men nor devils! The slave trade could not crush them out. Slavery dread, direful and malignant, could only stay a time. But now it is coming, coming I grant, through dark and trying events but surely coming. To the Negro- black curly headed, despised, repulsed, sneered at is worthless, a vital being and irrepressible.[75]

Crummel's ideas of racial potential also related closely to his philosophy of nationalism, suggesting a dual allegiance the race had unto itself and the American nation. On the one hand, his theology and political ideology called for racial solidarity and black nationhood, while at the same time he also believed the race had a destined responsibility to contribute to the strengthening of the American nation. According to Crummel, this responsibility was seen as a Christian duty, which only blacks had the capacity of fulfilling. Crummel criticized the morally and socially corrupt white nation in ways

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[73] Ibid., 202.
[74] Ibid., 204.
[75] Ibid., 204.

similar to David Walker, making the particular connection between social and political practice of racism.

> ...we are made spectators of the madness of the white
> race in their political gladiatorship. We stand off and see
> with our own eyes the carelessness; the unscruplousity,
> the bold, brazen dishonesty of lawyers, scholars, statesmen,
> clergymen and hosts of professors of religion in their political
> processes, well nigh half the union; endowing to keep the negro
> a subject race! And we see, as the consequences of this political
> dishonesty, the loss of honour, the lowering of the morality, the lack of
> virtue, the decline of true religion; in men, in families...
> whole communities agonizing with all subtlety of brain, with all the arts
> of intellect, with all the energy of will to crush the Negro and
> yet blindly and unconsciously, narrowing the orbit of that
> brain; shriveling the capacity of their own intellect; dwarfing
> the moral nature and cutting their own throats.[76]

The preservation of the American nation, which symbolized the grand agent of so called civilization, required specific religious attributes which Crummel believed only blacks possessed:

> I know of no people coming to this land which can confer
> the gifts the Negro has to offer to save this nation. The nation
> needs a quiet element added to its distracted moral forces. This
> is the Nature of the Negro...the nation needs the saturation of a
> religious sentiment in every province of thought and activity...[77]

Crummel's theology saw the salvation of the American nation along racial lines, asserting that amongst the heterogeneous population, what other people but black people, could arise to 'help neutralize the insanity of her political frenzy, and the wildness of her intemperate theorizing.'[78] He developed an important critique of the social nature of various white ethnic groups that comprised the white oppressing class and why they could not serve the purpose for the nation's salvation.

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[76] Ibid., 204.
[77] Ibid., 242.

> Not from the crazed Bohemian, with his criminal propensities and his animal instincts! Not from the German, with his godless speculations and his wild theories! Not from the superstitious Italians, ignorant of the simplest alphabet of freedom, paralyzed in every faculty by the stupidness of 'priestcraft'! Not from the angry Irishman, with his 'blind hysterics' and his 'school boy' heat! Not even from the more sober Anglo-Saxon; who is always preaching submission to oppressed people; yet himself ever shrieking 'Liberty or Death!' at a disagreeable tax or an imaginary encroachment![79]

Crummel believed the only way that Blacks could fulfill this desperately needed role to save the nation was through racial self-salvation and discipline. Both of these elements would become essential aspects in Marcus Garvey's theology many years later.

The need for blacks to fulfill the Christian duty of self-salvation proposed in Crummel's theology, further illustrated the practical nature of his theology, which introduced forms of spiritual self-reliance and responsibility reflective of the nationalist sentiments of self-determination. Crummel spoke of his pragmatic idea of salvation claiming:

> ...first he has his own soul to save, and by this I mean that, with the gift of divine aid, God has also thrown personal responsibility upon every man to achieve his own salvation. "Work out your own salvation, etc." We are not saved passively in a state of effortlessness inertia...We ourselves have got to ward our own spirits from the power of Satan to shield them from the poison of sin...[80]

His comments provide a definitive example of the more progressive theological ideas that did not preach complacency or 'otherworldly' doctrines of a kingdom beyond, but preached rather a doctrine of individual agency encouraging the race towards self improvement and social change. Crummel also wrestled with the complex issues of the race's newly acquired freedom in his theology. He noted that the act of emancipation

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[78] Ibid., 242
[79] Ibid., 242-243.

brought the gifts of freedom, property holding, education and the freedom of religion to blacks for the first time. These gifts, in turn demanded of the race organization and discipline.

Crummel surmised his awareness of such challenges of racial advancement in this transitional stage following slavery as a gradual process of sorts, suggesting:

> ... it is not human nature to make the sudden transition form abasement to superiority. It takes time for any people to recover themselves. It demands a system of severest training for human nature to reach the strength of manliness.[81]

According to Crummel, the recovery and transition of the race would come through a discipline and self-determined activism that would manifest as a duty of the race:

> ... it is the duty of a people to know their defects and weaknesses and to seek the remedy for them, the deadly trials and the formidable hindrance which are our heritage in this land. At the same time I have the strong conviction that our success and triumph are to come from our own inward resources, from the force of the character which we may attain through discipline.[82]

Racial discipline and organization in Crummel's eyes was the fundamental means for racial advancement and self-salvation as a religious duty. His ideas of self-reliance and self-determinaiton were pervasive throughout his theology, indicating a new form of religious nationalism that would become distinct in this time period.

Although Crummel spoke of black contributions to the American nation, his devoted involvement with the Liberia colony also provided glimpses into his ideas about

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[80] Ibid., 98.
[81] Ibid., 247.
[82] Ibid., 248.

black nation building initiatives in Africa. Crummel's visions for nation building in Africa however, were rooted in very colonial ideologies of the European Christian mission in Africa. Under the influence of the many white colonization parties, who propagated resettlement in Africa, Crummel developed the clouded missionary ideas of redeeming 'heathen' Africa, further revealing the problematic issues of racial identity and the relationships between blacks in the west and their kinsmen in Africa in the process of repatriation.

Many western black Christian leaders adopted the misguided stereotypes and notions that Africans and their traditional culture were barbaric or uncivilized, while their religions seen as primitive and pagan. This line of thought became the cause by which many of these black religious leaders felt they must go to Africa, with the work through Christ to 'civilize' and establish an independent nation for the uplift of the race.

Crummel's misinformed attitude towards Africa was expressed in his writing entitled *Planting the Christian Church in Africa* which captures the stereotypical views he held of Africans:

> Through the ages of ignorance and superstition, they (Africans) have been debased to the levels of bestiality! Hence, while the salvation of individual souls is the primary duty of the missionary, the obligation to lift up as far and as fast as possible, the whole level of society into order, rectitude and excellence for honor and glory of God and the progress of men.[83]

Crummel's missionary ideas concerning the 'heathen' status of Africa may very well have been formulated within his even more colonial thoughts about civilization. Statements such as the following, exposed the Eurocentric influence and racial misconceptions that had been internalized into his ideas and visions for Africa:

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[83] Ibid., 271- 272.

> The primary need, then, is spiritual existence.
> But then comes immediate necessity-civilization.
> "What" it is asked, "do you mean by this word
> civilization?" I mean by it, the clarity of the mind,
> from the dominance of false heathen ideas. I mean
> the conscious impress of individualism and personal
> responsibility. I mean the recognition of the body
> with its desires and appetite and passions as a sacred
> gift, and as under the law of divine obligation.
> I mean the honor and freedom of womanhood, allied with the
> duty of family development. I mean the sense of
> social progress in society... I mean an elevated use of
> material things and a higher range of common industrial
> activities. I mean the earliest possible introduction of letters
> and books and reading and intelligence to the man, his
> family and his social circles.[84]

This was not uncommon language amongst western black Christian missionaries, who had begun to turn their ideas towards Africa. Crummel would be one of the early theologians to begin incorporating the theology of racial destiny into their repatriation doctrines. His ideas of destined redemption and African development were closely related to his concepts of providence, where he explained,

> ...the forced and cruel migration of our race from Africa,
> and the wondrous providence of God, by which the Sons
> of Africa...trained, civilized and enlightened, are coming
> hither again, bringing large gifts, for Christ and his church
> and their heathen kin![85]

This is perhaps the greatest irony in Crummel's theology. After having established the important connections between God, the race and the visions for repatriation to Africa, the issue of advocating the Eurocentric ideas of 'civilization', posed severe contradictions in his theology concerning his views of racial identity. Yet, the combination of Crummel's ideas of the destined advancement of the black race, divine providence and

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[84] Ibid., 272.
[85] Josiah Ulysses Young, *A Pan African Theology: Providence and the Legacies of the Ancestors*, (Trenton, New Jersey: African World Press Inc. 1992), p. 28.

black emigration for the redemption of Africa and the race, all reflect an early stage of the nationalist and Pan African concerns in black Christian theology. His emphasis on Africa brought new and broader considerations of the black Christian struggle for race advancement to an international level. Overall, Crummel's theological ideas represent a critical stage in the broader developments of the black theological traditions.

Edward Blyden

The ideologies and efforts devoted to the socio-religious advancement of the black race globally, was also shared by one of the most active intellectual organizers and religious leaders of the nineteenth century, Edward Blyden. A West Indian, born on the Danish island of St. Thomas, Blyden was a dynamic scholar theologian religiously devoted to the efforts of racial advancement and repatriation to Africa. Much of his organizational and political works were based in Liberia, West Africa, where he struggled to help establish the first independent nation of western blacks returning to Africa. Blyden was a renaissance man of sorts, serving as an educator, prolific scholar, political activist, and a Pan African ambassador. Above all, he was a deeply religious man whose theological ideas concerned with racial advancement and religious redemption exemplified the evolving theological traditions, as they began to encompass the broader political ideas of Black Nationalism and Pan Africanist views of the nineteenth century.

As a contemporary to Crummel, Blyden's theology also contained the common themes of racial salvation, providence and the idea that redemption of Africa and her peoples was to be fulfilled through the destined emigration of oppressed blacks from the west. Like many other nationalist oriented leaders of the time, Blyden's theological ideas

focused on racial advancement. Blyden, along with Crummel, Henry McNeil Turner, Henry Garnett and a host of other black religious activists of the era, contributed to the larger black theological discourse in his own way, joining critical biblical hermeneutics to the ideological apparatus of political organizing and nation building. Marcus Garvey would later exercise very similar theological principles in his organizational structure.

Blyden stands out as a leading theologian and scholar activist in his influential role in the early Liberia settlement efforts. His scholarship and writings oftentimes focused around the issues of religion and the black race, where he highlighted the importance of racial culture and characteristics in religious terms. His theology melded the themes of cultural heritage with his concepts of providence, racial salvation and destiny. What stands out most significantly throughout these theological themes, was the role of emigration to Africa played in the advancement and redemption of the race. In a letter to African American minister, Reverend John Wilson in 1860, Blyden described his unwavering commitment to the advancement of the race.

> ...let me be forever discarted by the black race and
> let me be condemned by the white race, if I strive not
> with all my powers, if I put not forth all my energies to
> contribute to so important a solution...[86]

Some of Blyden's earliest rhetoric in the fight against the slave trade, was couched within his call for emigration to Liberia. An early publication by Blyden, entitled *A Voice from Bleeding Africa*, addressed the destructive toll slavery had on the race, while also asserting similar ideas as Crummel, that the experience of slavery serves as a motivation for racial self-initiative.

The fact that the souls of near three million men,

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[86] Hollis Lynch, ed., *Selected Letters of Edward Wilmot Blyden*, (Milwood, New York: KTO Press. 1978), p. 31.

> in the land of Freedom and Equal rights!!! Having been crippled, dwarfed and blinded, is no reason that they should continue to be crippled, dwarfed and blinded on the contrary, it furnishes a most forcible argument for the adoption of a plan to bring about a speedy and immediate amelioration of their condition.[87]

Blyden's plan for emigration was described in religious terms. In his call to 'colored men of every rank and station' the theologian believed the uplift of the race was a Christian duty and key to universal redemption:

> Their object is, the redemption of Africa and the disentrollment and elevation of the African race!!! Object worthy of the effort of every coloured man of every Christian, a consummation glorious in itself, and pregnant with glorious results to the whole human race!!![88]

The mission to establish Liberia as a nation for repatriated blacks from the west, reflected his theological ideas of racial destiny. Blyden envisioned the emigration to Liberia to be a key means by which racial recovery and ultimately racial salvation was to occur. His optimistic view about this great potential, saw the reconnection of the race to their motherland and heritage as an initial step towards the rebirth of the race's identity. An address to the Maine State Colonization Society in 1862 spoke of such views:

> As soon as the black man of soul, lands in Liberia finds himself surrounded by his own people, taking the lead in every social, political; educational and industrial enterprise, he feels himself a different man. He feels that he is placed in the high attitude of an actor, that his words and deeds will now be felt by those around him.[89]

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[87] Hollis Lynch, ed., *Black Spokesman: Selected Published Writings of Edward Wilmot Blyden.* (Frank, Cass and Co. Ltd. 1971), p. 9.
[88] Ibid., 10.
[89] Ibid., 12.

Blyden, however, was challenged with the mission to appeal to a western black population who had at a mass level, been made ignorant of their African heritage and the possibilities of racial advancement outside of America that Africa potentially possessed. Thus Blyden utilized his position as an educator and scholar, and strategically worked to counteract misrepresentations of blacks in the west and Africa. Through his pioneering scholarship, Blyden often concerned itself with refuting the charges of racial inferiority by way of his in depth writings on African history, culture and society. Blyden's push to promote race dignity and potential is best seen in his fervent efforts to establish higher learning institutions for blacks in Liberia and the west.

Education for Blyden was the institutional vehicle by which he foresaw the channeling of historical and industrial knowledge to the black masses for social uplift. In his article, *Aims and Methods of a Liberal Education for Africans*, Blyden spoke of the stages by which black religion, politics and literature would transit through in the return to Africa and the socializing process back into African culture claiming as, 'we advance further into Africa, and become one with the great tribes on the continent, these things will take the form which the genius of the race shall prescribe'.[90]

Blyden insisted that the vast African populations untouched by foreign influence or affected by European habits, would not be organized according to foreign patterns, but would be organized according to the nature of the people of the country.[91] This ideological approach to repatriation indicated an important point of departure, differing greatly from the more demeaning, colonial views held by many black missionaries, who often adopted the patronizing ideas of 'civilizing' the 'heathen' Africans propagated by

[90] Edward Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, (Baltimore, Maryland: Black Classic Press, 1994), p. 31.

racist whites. Blyden's concern for adaptation into African society on African social terms, draws attention to the challenges of integration the emigrationists faced. Blyden believed such social transitions would rely on preparation through education, in turn inspiring his efforts to establish the education institutions as a priority for Liberia's success.

Institutional education served as a rudimentary element in Blyden's nation building schemes. Blyden described the fundamental role and function of education as an instrument in the complete socio-cultural advancement of the race.

> The College is only a machine, an instrument to assist in carrying forward our regular work- devised not only for intellectual ends, but for social purposes, for religious duty, for patriotic aims for racial development...[92]

Blyden's educational philosophy was centrally concerned with the intellectual and moral uplift of the race. His concern for moral uplift, indicated how his educational prerogatives were actually pragmatic extensions of his deeper theological ideas devoted to religious reform. This close relationship between education and religious reform can be seen as another key attribute that consistently emerged in the black theological discourse across different stages. According to Blyden, education was itself, a form of self-help fundamentalism rooted in racial survival efforts by means of natural, God given talents or potentials.

> The object of all education is to secure growth and efficiency, to make a man all that his natural gifts will allow him to become; to produce self-respect; to beget a fitness for one's sphere of life and action and an ability to discharge the duties it imposes.[93]

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[91] Ibid., 82.
[92] Ibid., 82-83.

In terms of nation building, Blyden saw the Liberia project as a mission for reform and religious redemption. He described the movement as a turning point for the race in human history, representing the ultimate opportunity for the race to prove what he believed the race was capable of achieving as an independent people.

> We have a great work before us,
> a work unique in the history of the world,
> which others who appreciate its vastness and
> importance, envy us the privilege of doing.
> The world is looking at this Republic to see
> whether 'order and law, religion and morality,
> the rights of conscience, the rights of persons
> and the rights of property may all be secured
> and preserved by a government administered
> eventually by Negroes.[94]

Blyden's theological approach to nation building and racial advancement in Africa, employed a very critical view of civilization. He openly challenged the racist white criteria of civilization by comparing the positive attributes of African cultural characteristics to the detrimental aspects of European cultural ways. Blyden developed a complex view of understanding the cultural character and personality of the African race. These views would in turn become centrally tied to his theological ideas concerning providence as well as racial salvation and destiny.

Many of Blyden's early writings also focused on racial achievements of the past, and African culture as a wholesome and civilized source of heritage. In 1869, Blyden published an article in the Methodist Quarterly Review entitled *The Negro in Ancient History*, where he carefully set out to prove that blacks were the prominent figures of one of the world's earliest great civilizations in Egypt. Blyden's article was the first by a

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[93] Ibid., 84.
[94] Ibid., 107.

black writer to appear in a literary quarterly, and was also one of the earliest contributions made by a black to critically reconstruct aspects of ancient black history. A part of his intense research involved observations from his own personal visit to Egypt in 1866, where together, with his own readings he concluded that the pyramids were the works of black people.[95]

In respects to the Pyramids and their builders Blyden reflected in his memoirs:

> This, thought I, is the works of my African progenitors. Teage was right; they had fame, and their descendants should strive by nobler deeds to "retake it". Feelings came over me far different from those which I felt when looking at the mighty works of European genius. I felt that I had a peculiar "heritage in the Great Pyramid"- built before the tribes of mankind had been so generally scattered, and therefore before they had acquired their different geographical characteristics, but built by the branch of the descendants of Noah, the enterprising sons of Ham, from whom I descended...I seemed to feel the impulse from those stirring characteristics who sent civilization into Greece... I felt lifted out of the common place grandeur of modern times, and could my voice have reached every African in the world, I would have earnestly addressed him in the language of Teage- Retake your Fame![96]

As a scholar, Blyden was centrally concerned with how the race was portrayed in history. In a lecture given in 1880, Blyden proposed the need for a truthful historical account of the black race within the west. While the mainstream either ignored or belittled the black experience in the west, Blyden exposed the hard truths that the growth of European and American civilization and especially their moral development was based upon the exploitation of the black race. His emphasis on the particular role the black race played in contributing to the building of European and American national power, slightly

[95]Hollis Lynch, ed., *Edward Wilmot Blyden: Pan Negro Patriot*, (New York: Oxford Press, 1967), p. 55.
[96] Edward Blyden, "From West Africa to Palestine", (London: T.J. Sawyer 1873), pp. 104-105.

resembled the ideas of Crummel who saw such roles as being sanctioned by God for redemptive purposes.

Blyden elaborated on his views of the race's central role in the building of modern civilization.

> He who writes the history of modern civilization will be culpably negligent if he omit to observe and to describe the Black stream of humanity...It has affected culture and morality in the Eastern and Western hemispheres and has been the means for transforming European colonies into a great nationality...Nor can it be denied that the material development of England was aided greatly by means of this dark stream. By means of Negro labor sugar and tobacco were produced; by means of sugar and tobacco British commerce increased; by means of increased commerce the arts of culture and refinement were developed...The slaves exported to America have profoundly influenced civilization. The political history of the United States is the history of the Negro. The commercial and agricultural history of nearly the whole Americas is the history of the Negro.[97]

Blyden's scholarly writings took particular interest in creating a conducive context by which African culture and customs could be discussed. His in depth socio-cultural inquiries were published in his important book entitled *African Life and Customs* in 1908. The book sought to demonstrate that the African social system was socialist, co-operative and equitable. Blyden's research highlighted the sentiments of social philosophy and religious proverbs and their rudimentary roles in African life. Blyden wrote on the communistic characteristics of African society.

> The communistic order of African life is not the result of accident. It is born of centuries of experience and is the outcome of a philosophical and faultless logic. It's idea among all tribes is enshrined in striking proverbs... say the Veys for example a proverb runs thus: "What belongs to me is destroyable by water and fire; what belongs

[97] Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, p. 137.

to us is neither destroyable by water or fire.[98]

The role and nature of the cultural religions of Africa carried further significance for Blyden, who discussed religion in theological terms. Blyden interpreted the basic African views of God and the relationship between the creator, nature and humans in terms of a wholistic and nature based belief system. He recognized the value of religion as it related to the everyday reality and functions of African life.

> ...he (the African) only knows it (Creation Power) exists - I am- and is sufficiently impressed by the reality of its existence, whether looking within at the workings of his own mind or without at the operations of Nature. He knows that a Power not himself is working within and around him, and to not offend this power and gain its favor, he uses various means which appeal to his untutored imagination to effect this object...the African believes that the great being can be approached through every object he has created, whether animate or inanimate. He can conceive of nothing which is not instinct with the Creator..[99]

His theories of African religious ethos supported some of his broader socio-religious arguments that referred to the incompatibility and destructive impact of western Christianity on African culture and life in Africa as well as in the west.

Blyden's efforts to point out the more positive aspects of black history and African cultural heritage served as the basis for his racial philosophy of the ideal African that would a generation later be described in a phrase coined by Kwame Nkrumah as the 'African Personality'.

Blyden's 'African Personality' encompassed the belief that the ideal African could be considered the antithesis of the European in terms of racial characteristics and

[98] Lynch, *Black Spokesman.* p. 170.

demeanor. Blyden compared the racial features of the African and European where he described the European characteristics as being harsh, individualistic, competitive and combative. He saw European society as being highly materialistic where the worship of science and industry was replacing God. Such comparisons between the races were oftentimes described in religious or spiritual terms.

In an article entitled *The Jewish Question,* Blyden referred to the state of the European world as being 'immersed in materialism. Science and philosophy are the gods that men worship now'[100]. His concern for European civilization and its concentration on material and scientific ideas of progress as the source of moral decay and physical destruction, offered a critical explanation that reflected deeper theological notions. Blyden discussed the suspect relationship between European science and humanity stating:

> ...Science for all the really higher purposes of humanity is a dead organism of latent forces unless it is taken up by the moral nature unless animated by purpose and inspired by a great spiritual idea.[101]

His skepticism of western science further insinuated the destructive nature of the discipline on the greater society. He later wrote in 1907

Science is not the last word for humanity. It cannot be. It is continually threatening the existence of the mighty offspring to which it gives birth. It keeps itself armed to the teeth against its neighbor. Its most popular and lucrative inventions are machinery for the destruction of life. It multiplies its armies and increases its navies; and men wonder when all this would end and where it will lead.[102]

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[99]Ibid., 178.
[100]Ibid., 212.
[101]Ibid., 214.
[102] Lynch, *Pan Negro Patriot*, p. 63.

The stagnant moral development of the European were the dominant attributes Blyden perceived within the European character.

Blyden's 'natural African' on the other hand represented the African racial qualities as being the softer aspects of human nature, being cheerful, sympathetic and willingness to serve.[103] However Blyden felt these central characteristics of the African personality were undermined and suppressed by the oppressive dominance of European science and culture. Blyden charged Europeans for their oppressive nature and detrimental impact on African civilization. His accusations were grounded in his critical views of European colonialism.

> Now Europe in the great work which it
> believes itself called upon to do in Africa is
> producing conditions in which it is impossible
> for "souls" to "grow", and bodies can hardly
> survive. It is introducing the material results of science...
> But the value of this vast apparatus this ponderous machinery
> and these relentless application s of civilization,
> is neutralized and destroyed by their effect upon
> the spiritual and even physical vitality of the Race.
> The higher life of man, the moral and religious
> emotions, which nurse the well spring of a nobler
> life within...[104]

In his article *Study and Race*, originally published as a lecture, Blyden stressed the importance of black racial identification through religion and community as the foundation of the ideal African, at the same time alluding to the detriments of racial oppression. Blyden asserted 'What men generally have not yet found out, as they have not yet fully learned Christ, is the way to a righteous development of racial personality. One race tries to force another into it's own detriment and the detriment of humanity.'[105]

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[103] Ibid., 62.
[104] Lynch, *Black Spokesman,* p. 214.
[105] Ibid., 201.

By this principle, Blyden's race theory suggested the development of the racial personality was an essential and conscious duty, highlighting the importance of not only racial diversity, but individual racial development and distinction as well.

> ...the duty of every man of every race is centered for its individuality - to keep and develop it . Never mind the teachings of those who tell you to abandon that which you cannot abandon...If their theory were carried out, it would, with all the reckless cruelty of mere theory, blot out all the varieties of mankind, destroying all differences, sacrifice nationalities and reduce the human race to the formless, proto plasm from which we are told we come.[106]

Blyden's race ideas supported the distinction between races along the lines of characteristics and culture, and related it to his appeal for black race pride. Blyden declared:

> Honor and love your Race. Be yourselves as God intended you to be, or he would not have made you thus. We cannot improve upon his plan. If you are not yourself, if you surrender your personality, you have nothing left to give the world. You have no pleasure, no use, nothing which will attract and charm men, for by your suppression of your individuality you lose your distinct character. [107]

Blyden's emphasis on education to enhance racial advancement and promote racial pride, along with the development of the ideal African, will all be seen as central principles in Garvey's own uplift doctrine. In fact, Garvey derived some of his own racial theories from the works of Blyden. On several occasions Garvey referred to the need for blacks to read the great scholarly works of Blyden for enlightenment on their noble African past.

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[106] Ibid., 201.
[107] Ibid., 201-202.

An important aspect that remains consistent in Blyden's thought, that can also be seen throughout Garvey's theology as well, are the religious overtones that underlie their visions for racial pride, unity and purpose.

The ideas of providence, in relation to the conditions of the black race, are articulated in Blyden's 'theology of racial destiny'. Blyden, as did his predecessors and successors, utilized the Bible as the basis for a race consciousness, spiritual uplift and organization. Within his own critical interpretation of various biblical passages and themes, Blyden echoed similar sentiments as Crummel and others, emphasizing the role of God, his relationship to the black race, and the race's destined advancement. An overarching dynamic within Blyden's theology also carried over the religious rationalization for the race's subjugation and oppression as a divine construction set in place by God for a planned redemption, not only for the black race but essentially all the world.

Blyden discussed the attributes of the race further in his article, *Study and Race,* where he stressed the significance of the God given racial features of the black race.

> Remember, then these racial peculiarities are God given. For his own glory, they are and were created. To neglect them, suppress them, or get rid of them is to get rid of the cord which binds us to the Creator. Try to learn the important lesson that it is God's intention for you, that you should be differed from all the rest of mankind -that he placed you here to reveal a phase of his character not given to others to reveal; our duty is to find out what that is.[108]

Blyden's affirmation distinguishing African identity and personality from other races carried religious importance. He described individual African identity to be divine,

[108] Ibid., 202.

> ...to give up your personality, would be to give up the peculiar glory to which we are called. it would really be to give up the divine idea- to give up God- to sacrifice the divine individuality; and this is the worst of suicides. We cannot compromise on this subject. But to retain Race integrity and race individuality is no easy task.[109]

His precept of the 'divine individuality' of the race related directly to the theological of racial salvation and redemption.

As an extension of his race theory, Blyden detailed the racial categories of humanity and their particular religious stereotypes. His following statement concludes with a foreshadow of one Blyden's favorite analogies concerning the black race and God.

> The glory of the Jew was pure conduct and conformity to a life of religious law. The glory of the Oriental was calm, reached by putting aside all pursuits of earth and all passions of self. The Glory of the Greek was divine harmony, the balance and proportionate subordination of all things to one another and the best, so as to produce a perfect whole. The glory of the Roman was law and obedience, as the worship due to law. The glory of the African, thus far has been the glory of suffering-the glory of the cross,- the glory of the Son of Man- the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. But the future will have a different story to tell. The Cross precedes the Crown.[110]

Blyden believed the black race and Africa to be the 'spiritual conservatory of the world', where they would act as the peacekeepers among the ever- warring European nations and

[109] Ibid., 203.
[110] Ibid.,202-203

as 'consular' when the destructive scientific inventions of white men led to a crisis in their civilization.[111]

This idea of spiritual conservatory recollected the significant role Africans and Africa play in the development of the Judaic faiths. Blyden theorized:

> Africa may yet prove to be the spiritual conservatory of the world. Just as in past times, Egypt proved the stronghold of Christianity, after Jerusalem fell and just as the noblest and greatest Fathers of the Christian Church came out of Egypt, so it may be; when the civilized nations, in consequence of their wonderful national development, shall have had their spiritual perceptions darkened and their spiritual susceptibilities blunted...that they may have resort to Africa to recover some of the simple elements of faith; for the promise of that land is that she shall stretch forth her hands unto God.[112]

Blyden sought to prove how Africa in the bible played an incredible role as a 'consoler' and incubator for the Israelite faith. He described how 'The great progenitor of the Hebrew race and the founder of their religion sought refuge in Africa from the ravages of famine,' referring to Abraham. He also spoke of how Jacob and his Sons were subsequently saved from extinction the same way, further claiming:

> In Africa, the Hebrew people from three score and ten souls multiplied into millions. In Africa Moses, the greatest lawgiver the world has ever seen, was born and educated. Later, even greater than Moses and all the prophets and philosophers, when in infancy, was preserved from death in Africa,...and in his final hours, the Savior of mankind struggled up to the heights of Calvary under the weight of the Cross, accused by Asia and condemned by Europe, Africa furnished the man to relieve him of his burden. As they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country and on him they laid the cross that he might bear it after Jesus.[113]

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[111] Lynch, *Pan Negro Patriot*, p. 62.
[112] Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, p. 143.
[113] Ibid., 135.

The symbolic presence of Africa and Africans in the Judaic scriptures was central to Blyden's attempts to awaken blacks to the special relationship of their racial heritage as played out in the Christian story. Blyden drove home his ideas of providence and racial destiny with his analogy of the black race as the 'suffering servants', alluding to the Christ like qualities of persecution, resurrection and the service to humanity. Blyden explained:

> Africa is distinguished as having served and suffered. In this, her lot is not unlike that of God's ancient people, the Hebrews, who were known among the Egyptians as the of all;and among the Romans, in later times, they were numbered by Cicero with the nations born to servitude. The lot of Africa resembles also Him who made Himself of no reputation, but took upon himself the form of a servant, and having been made perfect, through suffering, became the Captain of our Salvation...If the principle laid down by Christ is that by which things are decided above that he who would be chief must become the servant to all, then we see the position which Africa and the Africans must ultimately occupy. And we must admit that through serving many, Africa- Ethiopia- has been stretching out her hands unto God.[114]

In response to an article written by Booker T. Washington entitled: *Southern Workman,* Blyden wrote a letter to Washington addressing his religious concept of racial servitude. Blyden spoke of the 'African Spirit' as a 'spirit of service', drawing again links to the 'Son of Man' who took it upon himself the form of a servant- emphasizing the biblical Hebrew term 'slave'. He went on to assert: ' The spirit of service in the black man is born of his spiritual genius. It is his essential characteristic', later stressing that the spirit must lead civilization before it can become distinctively Christian. He ended his letter by

[114] Ibid., 139.

saying: 'the supple, yielding, conciliatory, obedient, gentle, patient musical spirit that is not full of offensive resistance, now sadly the white man needs it!'[115]

Blyden believed that providence and fulfillment of racial salvation would emerge out of their experience of oppression and servitude, closely resembling the ultimate sacrifice that Jesus of Nazareth was in fact faced with. Blyden's idea of the 'cross preceding the crown' was concerning the race in spiritual terms, essentially embodying Blyden's theological idea of racial salvation as it is played out in the Christian story. His article entitled *Philip and the Eunuch,* referred to the significant presence and roles of Africans in the early Christian story. Blyden discussed the symbolism of the suffering servant and the African race as a rationale for why the black race itself has had to suffer.

> Christ was to be held up to the suffering African not only as a proposition for sin, and as a mediation between God and man, but as a blessed illustration of the glorious fact that persecution and suffering and contempt are no proof that God is not the loving Father of a forsaken people- but maybe rather an evidence of nearness to God, seeing that they have been chosen to tread in the footsteps of the first born of Creation, suffering for the welfare of others.[116]

Blyden further developed this hermeneutic rationale about the destined suffering and service of the black race in terms of how it contributed as a painful sacrifice for the welfare of others.

> Your suffering has contributed to the welfare of others. It is a part of the constitution of the universe that out of death should come life... All advancement made to a better future, by individual or races has been marked by suffering . This great law is written not only in the bible, but all history. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission.[117]

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[115] Lynch, *Black Spokesman,* p. 207.
[116] Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, pp. 185-186.
[117] Ibid., 186.

For Blyden the Christian story in itself spoke directly to the black experience and purpose, essentially becoming the means of regenerating and redeeming the race. He illustrated this best in his discussion and interpretation of the symbolic role of Simon the Cyrenian, the African who bore the cross for Christ in the final hours preceding the crucifixion. Blyden claimed that the

> ...preaching of Christ, and Him crucified, is the
> regenerating power Africa is to be reclaimed-
> the simple story of the Cross draws Africa and
> the black race into the heart of the Christian story itself.
> The final hours of the Man of Sorrows before the
> crucifixion as earlier described, led to the question
> 'what was the part that Africa took then?
> She furnished the man to share the burden of the Cross,
> with the suffering redeemer. Simon the Cyrenian, bore
> the cross after Jesus...thus enjoying a privilege and an honor,
> and was invested with a glory in which kings and potentates,
> martyrs and confessors in the large roll of ages would be proud to participate.[118]

The analogy of the Christ-like suffering servant and the black race was central to Blyden's theological vision for racial salvation and destined redemption. His hermeneutics suggesting that the experience of oppression was an act of providence, mirrored Crummel's similar ideas, indicating that such a theme continued to be an important element amongst many theologians. His theological reasoning further illustrated his efforts to place religious meaning on the struggle for advancement, reconciling scripture and the black race to their God and their religious destiny. His model of the 'African Personality' and the role of race conscious education and emigration all served as fundamental aspects in Blyden's theology of providence and racial destiny. As one of the most distinctive careers as a black leader during the

nineteenth century, the West Indian born Blyden synthesized key aspects of the evolving black Christian theologies into a doctrine calling for broader nationalistic and Pan African oriented schemes. This theoretical doctrine would later influence the theological ideology of Marcus Garvey, who would successfully incorporate many similar ideas into his own organizational movement and efforts. In effect, Garvey's theology would reflect much of his immediate predecessors demonstrating all the more, how Garvey remains linked to this evolving tradition of black Christian theologians.

[118] Ibid., 177-178.

Chapter 4:

Marcus Garvey as a Black Theologian

The advent of Marcus Garvey's movement and the development of his own theological ideas were inextricably connected to an era of dynamic theological and social activism, discussed in the earlier chapters. Garvey's theology would come to especially reflect some of the broader theological ideas and activities of Blyden, Crummel as well as many other religious activists.

Throughout the breadth of his organizational activities, Garvey would engage in a variety of theological activities, developing theological ideas and hermeneutics, which he in turn applied directly to his organizational focus for racial uplift and social programs. The infusion of his theological ideas into the superstructure of his racial uplift doctrine signified the birth of a practical theological message that related a disenfranchised and oppressed people back to their God, through re-inspired faith and works by means of social activism. In Garvey's eyes black racial advancement and salvation could only be achieved through religiously inspired social action.

His theology was directly concerned with several major themes identified in earlier black theological ideas. These themes included, the symbolic relationship between God, Christ and the black race, as well as providence, salvation, redemption and the religious destiny of the race on a global level. Garvey's theological discourse also developed important principles that related to the race's religious purpose in creation, racial responsibilities to God, religiously inspired work ethics, self-reliance and self-determination. Through speeches and sermons, Garvey made direct connections between recognition and obedience to God and the responsibility of the race to live up to a higher

standard of social enterprise that was to be ultimately initiated through God given talents. His ideas concerning certain standards of expectation placed on the race, were further illustrated by his belief in the special relationship between the black race and God that he saw to be marked with a particular destiny for salvation and redemption. Racial redemption to Garvey entailed both spiritual and material aspects of black life universally, with its ultimate fulfillment being in the return to and the unification of Africa and her people. His ideas in many ways resembled a form of African Zionism, which itself reflects the biblical Israelite prophetic traditions of nationhood struggle of the ancient Israelite people.

Within the larger enterprise of Garvey scholarship, attention paid to Garvey's religious thought varies. Both preeminent Garvey scholars, Dr. Tony Martin and Dr. Robert Hill, refer to the role religion played within Garvey's organizational activities, but do not distinctly identify Garvey as theologian, or him being involved in essential theological activities. Nor do they pronounce his movement to be religiously based necessarily. However, the author, Randall Burkett in his book, *Garveyism As a Civil Religion*, offers a different perspective in looking at religion in the Garvey movement and Garvey's own religious thought. Burkett proposes that the Garvey movement was very much a religiously based movement, labeling the organizational ideas and activities of Garveyism to be a 'civil religion' of sorts. Burkett's argument provides a greater context by which Garvey can be understood and considered as a religious leader and essentially a theologian in a broader black Christian theological tradition.

Dr. Tony Martin noted in *Race First*,

> Garvey did not indulge in religion for its own sake however, but used it as he did art- for furthering his program of race pride and self-reliance.[119]

Martin gives the sense here that religion is merely used as one instrument amongst other organizing tools. Martin summarized what he felt to be the basis for Garvey's religious program, pointing out Garvey's 'political use of religion began by the simple argument that if, as established Christian churches preached, man was made in the image and likeness of God, then black men should depict a God in their own image and likeness.'[120] Martin's observation is somewhat limited however, providing only a narrow view of what is really but a small aspect of Garvey's greater theological ideas that encompassed a variety of spiritual and social issues facing blacks of the day. Furthermore, Martin does not address how in fact Garvey's use of religion and theology, formed the essential platform by which his organizational doctrine for racial uplift was launched.

Hill also dealt with the religious aspects of Garvey's thought, in terms of Garvey's 'African Fundamentalism', which Hill refers to as 'Garvey's quasi-religious manifesto of black racial pride and unity.'[121] Hill, similar to Martin, does not confirm the rudimentary role of religion as the basis for Garvey's social program either, but sees it rather as only a partial religious idealism interwoven into his race pride rhetoric.

Burkett, on the other hand begins to address the notion that religion played a much larger and more fundamental role in the Garvey movement. Burkett's study not only regarded the U.N.I.A. as a religious movement of sorts, but further suggested

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[119] Tony Martin, *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association*, (Dover, Massachusetts: Majority Press, 1976), p. 69.
[120] Ibid., 69.

Garvey himself could be considered a theologian, providing a window by which this current study has expanded to locate Garvey within a larger black theological tradition.

Burkett's focus emphasized how Garvey's theological ideas served as an infrastructural basis through which his broader race advancement doctrine was developed organizationally. This approach reconsiders the role of religion in the Garvey movement, and identifies theological ideas espoused by Garvey, as they are found in his liberation movement and message.

Garvey's organizational activities began in 1914, with the founding of the Universal Negro Improvement and Conservation Association and the African Community's League in Jamaica. By 1916 Garvey's ventures to the U.S. would culminate the greatest period of organizational growth for the U.N.I.A., as organizational chapters would be established throughout North America, South America, and the Caribbean. U.N.I.A. activism continued even after his deportation from the U.S. in 1927. Following his deportation, the organization experienced a decline as Garvey faced numerous difficulties in maintaining organizational cohesion from his new headquarters in Jamaica.

Throughout the span of some twenty-seven years of organizational leadership, Garvey's theological ideas also developed. Amidst much of the organizational and socio-political changes that would occur during the Garvey era, his theological and religious ideas persistently remained at the center of his race advancement visions. No major fundamental shifts of theology can be seen in Garvey's thought, even after his deportation. But what is seen rather, is the refinement of his religious ideas after so many

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[121] Robert Hill, *Marcus Garvey: Life and Lessons*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1987), p. xxxvi.

years of lived and learned lessons through organizational leadership and spiritual reflection.

From the beginning of his leadership career, to some of his last organizational meetings in the summer of 1937, Garvey's theological ideas were communicated through numerous organizational speeches, sermons, lectures and writings that served as the oratorical lifeline of his movement.

The majority of the speeches were printed along with his many editorials and articles in the various publications affiliated with his organization. Garvey's organization publications were the central communication organs that enabled the movement doctrine and message to be so wide spread, successfully reaching black people in the Americas, the Caribbean, Africa and even Europe. Being a master orator as well as a master of the main print media of the day, Garvey was able to deliver his theological ideas through the these most effective means of mass communication.

The main publications in which we find much of Garvey's theological ideas are in the *Negro World*, a weekly newspaper in print from 1918 to 1933 and a monthly magazine called the *Black Man*, published from 1929 to 1931. Other publications included the U.N.I.A. organizational creed called African Fundamentalism, that appeared in 1925; a collection of Garvey's writings compiled by Garvey's wife, Amy Jacques Garvey, called the *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*, printed in two volumes in 1923 and 1925; and one of his last publications being the printed forms of his last lectures given in 1937, called the *Course on African Philosophy.*

From 1918 until 1933, the *Negro World* grew to be one of the most widely read race papers of the times, establishing itself as the longest running paper that delivered

Garvey's organizational message. The *Negro World* devoted its front page to Garvey's editorials or articles, which often times included his discussions on religion. Within the pages of this paper, Garvey's speeches and sermons were also included in complete detail. Garvey had enlisted a corps of very proficient shorthand writers, who wrote his speeches down verbatim that would later fill many pages of the organization's printed materials. In this way his speeches and especially his sermons were able to circulate and resonate among the black masses, adding to the effective appeal of his organizational mission and his theological visions as well.

The *Black Man*, began its publication in 1929, after Garvey's expulsion from the U.S.. Although its short-lived duration only lasted until 1931, it too devoted many of its pages to the editorials and coverage of Garvey speeches and sermons. The events and meetings held at Edelweiss Park in the latter days of Garvey's organizational activities in Jamaica, were quite often the times in which Garvey's sermons could be heard. These sermons were thoroughly recorded and published in the *Black Man* as well.

Perhaps one of the most developed discourses reflecting Garvey's theological principles, was recorded in the compiled lecture series he delivered in 1937 in Toronto. As a part of his course on African Philosophy, that was designed to train a select group of U.N.I.A. officers to carryout the organizational functions after he had been deported, Garvey devoted two important and detailed chapters to religion alone. It was in this publication that Garvey clearly discussed his refined theological reasonings on God and Christ. He would go into great detail about God, creation, the mystery of the trinity and other pertinent theological elements that will be discussed later. These lessons help define

Garvey's theological ideas more clearly in line with many of the activist theologians that proceeded him.

The organizational ideology and doctrine of Garvey's mass movement, under the auspices of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, were based on his concepts of racial solidarity, self-determination and Black Nationalism. Resonating with the spirit and ideas of the Black Nationalist movements of the late 1800's, Garvey, through the U.N.I.A., would become the *par exemplar* in the forefront of Black Nationalist activism of the era. Garvey's own nationalism would come to reflect the strong influences of his deeper religious ethos and theology of black racial salvation and redemption, as they related to the immediate issues of racial uplift and socio-economic advancement.

Socio-politically, Garvey saw black people to be universally oppressed on racial grounds, which called for any program of emancipation to be built around the idea of race first.[122] Thus, his organizational call for racial unification sought to link the dispersed millions of blacks throughout the world who suffered under similar experiences, and instill within the masses priorities concerned with racial dignity and advancement. Much of the 'race first' sentiments espoused by Garvey would be supported by his religious thinking, comprising an integral aspect of his theology.

The ideas of racial dignity were fostered throughout various channels of the U.N.I.A activities, ranging from the newspapers, which featured articles on black history; to the sponsoring of beauty contests; as well as manufacturing black dolls for children and encouraging followers to support black businessmen and professionals.[123] These all

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[122] Martin, *Race First*, p. 23.

[123] Ibid.

represent the concerted efforts to evoke the black racial self-esteem. Garvey would also imply strong educational tactics emphasizing the greatness of black racial heritage much like Crummel and Blyden as well.

As was noted in Crummel and Blyden's efforts for racial advancement, Garvey also effectively emphasized African heritage and the legacy of black historical accomplishments. To Garvey, history was the source not only of one's identity, but it also served as an example of what blacks were capable of doing as a race. In essence knowledge of one's black history became a purpose and important driving force for inspiration for the advancement of the race.

Garvey's own passion and reverence for black history as a source of inspiration was enthusiastically stated:

> My firm purpose, my one purpose in life;
> is to work for the salvation of my race. Because of
> the cries from the grave- I hear the cry of 300 years.
> the cry of my great grandparents n the cotton and cane
> fields I hear the wailing souls from heaven and from regions below.
> I hear the cry of my mother and father and millions of Negroes
> who have been brutalized: "Go on Garvey! Go on! Go on!"
> and so fellow men because of that cry that comes from the grave
> I have given up all material desires; I have given up all temporal
> pleasures and have dedicated myself to the sacred principle of the
> U.N.I.A., the emancipation of the Negro Race and a free and
> redeemed Africa.[124]

It was Garvey's firm belief that in order for blacks to rise to their potential destiny, they must have knowledge of their past as a race. He was well known for his quote "A people without knowledge of their past or culture is like a tree without roots."

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[124] Editorial, *Negro World.* 25 July, 1925.

Garvey further insisted that blacks needed to be educated, particularly with their own 'black history'. He declared in one of his earliest organization pamphlets *A Talk with Afro-West Indians,* in 1914:

> You who do not know anything of your
> ancestry will do well to read the works of
> Blyden, one of our historians and chroniclers,
> who have done so much to retrieve the lost
> prestige of the race and to undo the selfishness
> of alien historians and their history, which has
> said so little and painted us so unfairly.[125]

This quote brings to light the strong impression and influence of his fellow West Indian Blyden had had on Garvey at that time. Garvey would go on to reproduce several passages from Blyden's monumental work *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* through the remainder of the pamphlet, further revealing the extent of impact Blyden's theological thought would also have on Garvey. His obsession with history was indeed a basic prerequisite for black racial advancement, as he persistently lectured blacks on its importance as he does here:

> Read history incessantly until you master it.
> This means your own national history, the history
> of the world, social history, industrial history and the
> history of the different sciences; but primarily,
> the history of man. If you do not know what went
> on before you came here and what is happening
> at the time you live, but away from you, you will
> not know the world and will not be ignorant of
> the world and mankind.[126]

His concerns about the educational systems of the day hiding the truth about black history, were legitimate in many ways, as he critically looked at the Eurocentric

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[125]Robert Hill, *Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers Vol. I, 1826-1919*, (Berkeley: University of California Press 1983), p. 57.

detriments to black learning. This issue only drove him to further encourage blacks to 'searchingly scan everything and read, particularly history, to see what you can pick out for the good of the race.'[127]

Garvey, like Crummel, Blyden and other nationalist theologians, recalled the black heritage of Egypt and its great civilization, and the presence and influence of blacks in the Middle East and Asia minor history as well. Even more importantly, Garvey adopted theological ideas similar to religious leaders of the times and earlier, as he took special interest in highlighting the significant presence of blacks in biblical history. Much of Garvey's theological precepts centered around evidence of the historical black presence and contributions to biblical antiquity, emphasizing the roles of blacks in the Old and New Testaments:

> There are statements in the Bible, in
> the Old Testament and New Testament,
> to show that Black was always an important
> color among the races of Man. Abraham had
> kept company with a black woman, even
> though he had his wife Sarah, by whom he had
> Ishmael.[128]

Garvey would go to great extents of incorporating the aspirations of education, historical and vocational into the infrastructure of his organization. He shared with Blyden, the idea that educational and vocational institutions were the vehicle by which the masses could be educated, trained and ultimately liberated. He echoed Blyden's ideas of education and institutions of Liberia by asserting 'It is through institutions of a race that the civilization

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[126] Tony Martin, ed., *Marcus Garvey: Message to the People: The Course of African Philosophy,* (Dover, Massachusetts: Majority Press, 1986), p. 2
[127] Ibid.,12.
[128] Ibid., 13.

and culture of the race are built.'[129] In referring to nation building, Garvey continued to emphasize that such institutions would help promote a 'higher life' and establish an organized society. More importantly, Garvey felt 'the black race must have control over his own institutions' based upon their own cultural and civilized idealism.

Garvey asserted this idea on several occasions.

> His (the Negro) universities, colleges and schools
> may engage in the same process of education,
> but with an adopted curriculum necessary for
> the special benefit of the Negro...[130]

The U.N.I.A. would take pride in establishing central educational and vocational programs and institutions in its racial uplift strategies. The organizing of official Liberty Halls, as well as auxiliaries fostering self-improvement such as the paramilitary 'African Legion'; Black Cross Nurses; the Universal African Motor Corps for automobile repairs and operation. There were also the Juvenile divisions offering elementary courses in black history, economics and social etiquette. Education and training for black children was a priority for Garvey who was quoted in the Jamaican Daily Chronicle in 1915 discussing his organizational goal was 'to provide educational and industrial colleges for the further education and culture of our own boys and girls.'[131]

Between 1918 and 1920, several U.N.I.A. businesses emerged in New York City, such as the famous Black Star Line, the first black owned steamship line in 1919. Although the Black Star Line enterprise eventually fell through, the attempt represented the resilience and self-determination that best characterized the U.N.I.A.'s mission. Other businesses owned and operated by the organization and its members included the Negro

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[129] Ibid., 101.
[130] Ibid.,
[131] Hill, *Marcus Garvey: Life and Lessons,* p. xlvi.

Factories Corporation, the Universal Laundries, a Millinery Store, several restaurants, grocery stores and hotels, tailoring establishments, doll factories and printing presses.[132]

The entrepreneurial activities initiated by Garvey stemmed from his conviction that racial power would come through black economic independence and self-determination, which the U.N.I.A. achieved to an extent that no other black organization had accomplished at that time. The ideological basis behind this socio-economic agenda for black independence can in fact be traced back to his nationalistic theology.

Garvey's African Fundamentalism, embraced the concepts of race first and self-reliance that in many ways, reflected the sentiments of Crummel and Blyden's theologies of racial destiny. Garvey spoke on the importance of allegiance to self and race and described them with religious connotations:

> ...Your first allegiance shall be to your God, then your family race and country...There is no humanity before that which starts with yourself. "Charity begins at home."[133]

African Fundamentalism, as the organizational catechism, included the concepts of racial solidarity, advancement, and universal racial redemption, highly characteristic of the theological concerns pursued by his predecessors.

Some of Garvey's basic theological ideas relating to the visions for racial progress and providential destiny were expressed in an editorial on African Fundamentalism, where Garvey wrote:

> We Are the Arbiters of Our Own Destiny:
> God and Nature first made us what we are, and then out of our own creative genius we make ourselves what we want to be. Follow always that great law. Let the sky and God be our limit and Eternity our

[132] Martin, *Race First,* pp. 33-34.
[133] Ibid., 5.

> measurement. There is no height to which we cannot
> climb by using the active intelligence of our own minds.
> Mind creates and as such as we desire in Nature
> we can have through creation of our own minds.
> Remember we live, work and pray for the establishing
> of a racial empire whose only natural spiritual and political limits
> shall be God and "Africa at home and Abroad".[134]

Throughout Garvey's doctrine, the central themes of black historical presence in the bible and parallels with the ancient Israelites, and the ideas of salvation, redemption and the destiny of the black race, were pervasive. Yet, Garvey did not announce an official religion or denomination to lead the organization. This would prove to be one of his most tactful efforts in diplomatically absorbing the broad range of members that had as many varying religious beliefs and traditions into the organization. While being surrounded by several capable ministers such as Alexander Mcguire, Reverend Norton Bellamy and several others, Garvey himself stood out in prominence with his own distinctive theology, which would become the driving force behind his movement and the great appeal that attracted so many followers, which included Christians, Muslims and black Jews.

Garvey's ideas of God, Creation and Humanity

As a spiritual man, Garvey's philosophy towards religion was one encompassing a universal truth and understanding of various world beliefs. In 1929 Garvey elaborated on the meaning of religion, showing the deeply reflective thoughts of a man who in many ways understood the value of religion to humanity, irregardless of belief.

> Man is a religious being, that is to say,
> he must have some kind of belief- call it
> superstition or what not. Man who has
> started to think traces his origin beyond

[134] Ibid., 6.

> man; and as such has been groping in the
> dark to find out the source from whence he
> came, and by our own institution we have
> attributed that source to something beyond us;
> and in so believing we accept the idea of a religion.
> Some make our God the God of Fire; some make
> our God the God of water; some make our God
> the God of the Elements and others of us accept
> the Christian belief. Man's religion is something we
> cannot eliminate from his system or destroy in him;
> therefore it is folly for any man to go about attacking
> another man's religion because to him it is Fundamental.
> You may be a Christian; you may be a Mohameden;
> that is your religion. We are all entitled to our own
> religious belief...[135]

His thoughts capture an important essentialism concerning universal spirituality that served as the backdrop for his broader theological views. Although the organization informally took on Christianity as the predominant religion, his more universal religious views remained important within the U.N.I.A., as the diversity of religious affiliations grew along with the organization's membership.

Garvey's theology begins with a very rudimentary discussion of God and the universe, describing God and the universe in basic terms. Garvey spoke of God in terms of 'spirit and Universal Intelligence'. Believing it is intelligence that creates, Garvey assumed that the existing universe was thus created out of the Supreme Intelligence of God, and that man, as a part of this creation of Universal Intelligence, was created in the image and likeness of God. Man's likeness to God was identified through man's intelligence.[136] Garvey elaborated on this relationship insisting 'it is the intelligence of

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[135] " Honorable Marcus Garvey Outlining Discussion on Formulating Plans to Unify the Religions and beliefs of the Entire Negro Race," *Black Man*, 31 August, 1929.
[136] Martin, *Message to the People*. p. 45.

man that is like God, but man's intelligence is only a unitary particle of God's Universal Intelligence.'[137]

According to Garvey, God, out of this Universal Intelligence made matter and mind, and humans being made up of matter as well as mind, resembled their creator, concluding 'humans must be made in the image of God, because nothing could exist without the universal creation of God.'[138]

Garvey referred to the intelligence of man as being the paternal link to God, yet at the same time distinctly defined man's intelligence as limited, compared to God, removing any conception that man in any way was equal or comparable to God.

> As God made the universe out of his Universal knowledge or intelligence, so man in his unitary knowledge or intelligence can make a typewriter, an automobile, or a chair, but he cannot make the universe, because his unitary intelligence is not as much or as great as God because he is only a unit of God and God is the whole.[139]

What remains important in recognizing Garvey's perceptions of humanity as a unitary particle of a much greater power or intelligence, is his insistence that certain basic equalities existed between all human beings. Garvey spoke of the belief that all people have been endowed by God with human intelligence and spirit, 'thus left to their own devices to solve the problem of survival.'[140]

This point played a crucial role within his ideas of racial uplift, as it directly opposed the myths of white superiority and black inferiority. It might be suggested that the tenants of Garvey's broader ideas of racial empowerment and advancement were, in

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[137] Ibid., 45.
[138] Ibid., 45.
[139] Ibid., 45-46.

effect, grounded within the fundamental theological concept that there is one God that is all powerful and responsible for the creation of humanity, where people are products of this greater God, consistent with inherent qualities which essentially define them as equals in potential and capabilities.

His ideas concerning the equality of human potentials, were embedded in his call to the spiritual consciousness of the black masses to become more aware of their own God given potentials, and challenged blacks to shatter the stereotypes of inferiority. This train of thought further encouraged blacks to see themselves as human beings possessing as many gifts and strengths as any other race. Garvey formed his language around this theological theme stating:

> When God Almighty created man, He created not a superior being in all the human race, but all men were created equal. He said 'I am not a Respecter of persons, peoples or nations nor races.' God is not a respecter of persons, He is not the respecter of the yellow, nor the brown, nor the white races. Man was placed in this world with an equal gift of mind, matter and soul, which is the common endowment of all men. You suffer terribly because you refuse to understand and appreciate all these things.[141]

Garvey developed an important hermeneutic dealing with the basis of human creation, specifically emphasizing the nature and meaning of the relationship between God the creator, and man, the created. This particular hermeneutic would expand into a series of themes that Garvey was concerned about, dealing with black spiritual purpose and

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[140] Martin, *Race First*, p. 70.
[141] " Be Conscious of Yourself, Nothing is Impossible for You to Achieve," *Negro World,* 20 December, 1930.

existence, the identity of self and God, God invested qualities and talents as well as racial responsibility to God and the race.

On several occasions Garvey claimed that their oppressed status was not intended or acceptable to God, that in fact God had invested in them talents and gifts that had been neglected. This notion related to his belief that the fault of the oppressed state of the black race lied with the race and not God. In an article entitled '*The World as It Is*' Garvey advanced his views of humans in creation, describing the dangers of complacency and the need for confidence to advance the race:

> The man or woman who has no confidence in self is an unfortunate being, and is really a misfit in creation. God Almighty created each and everyone of us for a place in the world, and for the least of us to think that we are created only to be what we are and not what we can make ourselves is to impute an improper motive to the Creator for creating us. God Almighty created us to be free. That the Negro race became a race of slaves was not the fault of God, the Divine Master. It was the fault of the race. Sloth, neglect, indifference, caused us to be slaves. Confidence, convictions action will cause us to be free men today.[142]

Garvey's theology would continue to wrestle with the meaning of existence for the black race and its purpose in this world. With the intent to encourage a more esteemed sense of self within the race, he often highlighted the elevated status of humans in the hierarchy among the subjects of God's creation as an expectation and standard by which the race should live.

> What have you done, what are you doing to justify your existence; to justify that great gift that God has bestowed upon you ? His gift of life...We are subjects of the Creator,

[142] " The World As It Is," *Black Man*, 11 April 1929.

> around us stand the mysterious yet noble
> universe also a subject of God. In the
> creation there is nothing that God has exalted
> above man, in that God has made of a part
> himself; next to himself and above everything
> with life...[143]

Garvey's theology dealing with humanity as God created, also involved the idea that in being part of this divinity, blacks possessed not only a sovereignty over the universe but the God-like aspects of creative power, which Garvey ultimately believed to be the key to black self-emancipation and salvation. In an address in 1929, Garvey drew analogies between the relationship of God and the creative power of man, making note that man was sovereign lord in creation, according to his God given intelligence.

> When God made man in his own image,
> and breathed into his nostrils the breath of
> life making him like himself, the Absolute
> God endowed the created with an integral
> part of himself...After the creation of man
> he was given authority to possess, to become
> lord of all things visible...Man therefore, with the
> right given to him by the everlasting God, is a
> creator...[144]

The creative power of man, according to Garvey was further incorporated into the philosophy of the U.N.I.A., that persistently emphasized that the responsibility of liberation rested upon the race and not God. The language that follows characterizes the doctrinal approach employed by Garvey in the U.N.I.A.

> ...we teach that being sons of God, being
> a part of God and being endowed with the
> virile faculties and sovereignty of our own
> lives, we are the ones who should create our
> environment and make our world if we are
> really conscious of the fact that we are Sons

[143] Ibid.,
[144] "Man's Creative Intelligence," *Black Man*, 1 June 1929.

> of God. We transfer the responsibility therefore
> from God the Everlasting , the Absolute one,
> to ourselves.[145]

Racial responsibility unto God was also paramount to Garvey, who saw the neglect of black racial potentials to actually be an act of abuse of the God within. To Garvey this neglect in itself was seen as a form of divine offense and disgrace. The idea of racial responsibility reflected his insistent call for black self-reliance, reiterating an important aspect of the relationship between God and the black race. He also associated racial responsibility to God, with the basis of nation building. These ideas culminated in a Black Man article:

> If you want an empire, if you want a nation,
> if you want a strong and powerful race, if you
> want a home, it must be your creation. Don't
> you ever get away with the idea that God, because
> he is the father of all is going to assume the
> responsibility of doing for you what he has
> endowed you with faculty to do for yourself.
> The man who sits on his faculties is abusing
> the God in him, is destroying the God in him
> and insulting the usefulness of what that
> God, who breathed into his nostrils
> and created him in his own image gave him.[146]

[145] Ibid.,
[146] Ibid.,

One critical principle of Garvey's theology concluded that a part of the reason blacks failed to recognize the God and latent powers within was due to fear, which was an extent of the lack of racial self-confidence. To remedy this, Garvey promoted ideas of self-mastery and creative power, which again relied on his theory of the elevated status of humans in the hierarchy of God's creation. Garvey developed his thoughts of fear and failure in the following analogy:

> God whose duplicate is man, has no
> fear and man being a duplicate of God
> himself can have no fear. Man is master of
> himself; man is master of his environment;
> man is master of his creation. And man who
> knows himself has no fear for man or anything
> in God's creation but God, who created all things.
> Man is master of his own destiny; man is architect
> of his fate. The unfortunate thing that has
> held the Negro in servitude, in slavery shackled
> economically and mentally is because he has brought
> into his soul, is because he brought into his heart that
> venom, that devil fear...[147]

Garvey here, critically looked at the psychological complications of the inferiority complex that apparently transfixed blacks at the time. The fight against this internal fear demanded that blacks throw off the shackles of dependency and objects of occasional charity by recognizing the God and God given talents within, and in turn assert this divinely inspired self-determination through social action. Together, self-determination and self-reliance served as two of the most important ideological tenants within his organizational doctrine for racial uplift. Both of these tenants have their roots in Garvey's theology. He enunciated his specific views of the 'ideal man' in creation, as one who expressed the self-empowering agency of self-reliance.

> To me, a man has no master but God. Man in his authority is sovereign lord. As for the individual man, so of the individual race...So few of us can understand what it takes to be a man—the man who will never say die; the man who will never give up; the man who will never depend upon others to do for him what he ought to do for himself; the Man who will not blame God, who will not blame nature, who will not blame Fate for his condition; but a man who will go out and make his conditions suit himself...[148]

With the intentions to inspire the masses of oppressed blacks into an organized movement, Garvey fused together his ideas of God given talents with the popular nationalistic notions of the day. This fusion to Garvey meant to not only see oneself as a part of God, but to also see oneself as a part of the black race and nation with a divine purpose.

The religiously based principles of racial responsibility, encouraging self-determination and racial work ethic amongst blacks formed the basis for Garvey's larger ideological economic and social agenda for race advancement. His ideas of self-reliance were underpinned with references to tapping the inner reservoirs of black will power. Garvey believed that independence through self-reliance could be achieved when blacks 'organized the objective power, the realization power to bring within his grasp all that he needs.'[149]

The self-help process would begin with the renewing of one's own perception of themselves as a race, symbolically seen by Garvey as the rebirth of a people. The development of a new perception of racial identity would carry with it new responsibility as well. The rebirth process resembles an important parallel relating to the ancient

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[147] "None But the Fear of God," *Black Man* 20 April 1929.
[148] Ibid.,

Israelites, who too were literally "reborn" coming out of Egyptian captivity, acquiring a new identity through a renewed relationship and covenant with God. Garvey discussed the renewal of the black race of his own times as a process, which involved the race first accepting the responsibility of their conditions and not blaming God. The need to re-mold the race and advance it through self-determination became a leading theme to which Garvey spoke on.

> ... we have to remodel ourselves
> remake ourselves mentally and spiritually
> placing responsibility where it ought to be.
> The responsibility is with ourselves. Remember
> that-that each and everyone of you is responsible
> for what you want, not the stars, not the Fates,
> not some superstitious creature but ourselves...
> There is nothing that you desire for yourself that
> you cannot get if you will it with the determination
> of a man.[150]

Self-renewal and black self-actualization of potentials filled Garvey's rhetoric with racial optimism. His objective to encourage a new perception of race was rooted in strong nationalist sentiments, where his referrals to re-discovery was to be understood in terms of the collective race and the advancement of 'a people':

> ...at any time that you should re-discover yourselves
> as a capable people, as a self-reliant Race, anytime you
> will have discovered yourselves that in you is resident a
> power that can be exercised to your own progress, your own
> development, and you start out actually and earnestly and
> sincerely to do that, it may not be a wonder that you in
> the next thirty to fifty years may become world leaders.[151]

Garvey shared similar ideas of black racial status progressing beyond other races with Crummel, who subscribed to the ideas of destined black racial superiority. Garvey in his

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[149] "Edelwiess Park Meeting," *Black Man*, 8 June 1929.
[150] Ibid.

own terms, rationalized the race's lack of mental progress was an indicator of a potential that would eventually advance the race. He once proposed:

> ...there is no reason why you should not develop such an intelligence, because you have slept on your mentality for hundreds of years; you have rested mentally longer than any other race in the world. And therefore you ought to be more mentally powerful today than the other people...[152]

Garvey's ideas of God-invested talents within black people became the religious work ethic philosophy of the UNIA. Theologically, Garvey spoke of the 'dangerous idea that to be meek and humble is to merit God's blessing,' further pointing out that such a notion amongst blacks was actually the contrary, where in his eyes to be meek and humble was a merit of 'God's curse'. He claimed that 'God's blessing as it is written and as it is said is on the industry, is on the work of man.'[153] The theme of work ethic carried with it strong spiritual connotations, as it served as an example of Garvey's belief in faith through works. Garvey implied work to be directly related to one's status and relationship with God, concluding that it is only through work that one is blessed by God.

> God has a special blessing for the industrious man, the laborer, the worker who will seek his bread by the sweat of his brow...the industrious race, the industrious nation, the industrious empire shall ever triumph and shall ever merit the blessing of God.[154]

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[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid.
[153] "None But the Fear of God," *Black Man*, 20 July 1929
[154] Ibid.

As with the individual, his idea of blessings by work also carried with it the concern for nation building, where the meaning of spiritual work ethic became a part of the language of the U.N.I.A. objectives

> It is by your work that you shall be blessed;
> it is by your work that you shall be recognized
> as a worthy son of the Almighty Creator.
> And so the UNIA is endeavoring to bring
> home to the four hundred million Negroes of
> the world that if we are to achieve, if we are to
> accomplish the things that are great and grand,
> if we are to merit God's blessing we must work
> as it is man's duty to build the world around us
> that we desire for ourselves.[155]

Garvey's religious rhetoric drove home his religious work ethics as seen in his column *The World as It Is* subtitled: Build! Build! Build!, in an issue of the Black Man newspaper. In this article Garvey referred to the 'divine injunction written everywhere,' describing how 'the quickened spirits of awakened Negroes can sense it; their ears can hear it as it comes again and again, challenging the manhood of the race.'[156] At times Garvey used apocalyptic language to further his points of the need for racial work and advancement. The figurative language included references to God in providential terms, as the 'immortal eyes can read its imprint as it is being written with prophetic fingers across the scroll of heaven, by the hand of Fate.'[157]

In another important aspect of his theology Garvey made the point that although man, and in this case the race, had the responsibility to work for salvation, he also explained the role in which God would play as a divine inspirer from which the race would be moved to accomplish these objectives for themselves.

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[155] Ibid.
[156] "The World As it Is," B*lack Man.* 12 June 1927.

> The very soul of Infinity is speaking to the children of Ham at the present time, urging them onwards and upwards to the expansion of powers conferred upon them by the bountiful hand of the Great Universal Whole...Build! Build! Build! This insistent cry of the spirit of Achievement will not down.[158]

The examples discussed here, survey essential components of Garvey's theology as they related to the broader mass organizing ideas and initiatives. The connections made between his theological views and organizing doctrines were further developed in other areas as well.

Garvey on Materialism

Garvey's theology, which focused much of it's concern on spiritual work ethics, and nation building, inevitably had to deal with the issues of materialism as well. Materialism, within the larger scope of his organizational objectives was a necessary aspect of racial advancement. The materialism of which Garvey discussed however, should not be mistaken with the ideas of a blind consumerism, but should first be understood religiously rather, as an instrumental part of nation building, to which Garvey said:

> If in the world of materialism it is good for the German to found an empire; if it is good for the Anglo-American to build up a nation, by the same reign of Providence, by the same dawn of life, by the same blessing of the Almighty it is right for the African to build up an empire at home and abroad.[159]

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[157] Ibid.,
[158] Ibid.,
[159] Editorial, *Black Man*, 25 May 1929.

The pragmatic nature of Garvey's theology is perhaps best demonstrated in the balanced way materialism is dealt with as a part of the everyday spiritual life of poor, oppressed black people. Garvey conscientiously observed the relationship between spirituality and materialism as an important means of security and protection of one's own life. He would make a functional connection between materialism and the actual physical or social environment that re-enforced the spiritual well being of the race. He elaborated on this relationship in detail.

> While I give full expression to the spirit, I shall also
> exert the materialism in me which shall go hand in hand
> with the spiritual to protect man's life and protect my own.
> So Negroes, look at the light- the light of the spirit-
> but also hold on to the light of materialism of your Race.
> The materialism of your Race brings you protection-
> the protection of your own, and the protection of
> your surroundings. Hold fast to it as you
> hold on to the spirit of God.[160]

Garvey firmly believed blacks would come into possession of their own material share and should enjoy the benefits of such. In basic terms he elucidated his feelings about materialism by stating 'life is what you make it,' believing that physical happiness was just as important in life as was spiritual happiness. Garvey developed a highly philosophical outlook on the relationship of spirituality and the physical demands and needs of the modern world. His ideas represented a much deeper theological reasoning that further reflected the challenge that many theologians faced in critically applying basic Christian principles in practical ways to everyday black life. In one particular case Garvey confronted the duality of the spiritual and physical world, identifying the

[160]Ibid.

influential role the physical played in spirituality, suggesting a very challenging view of what it would take to be a true Christian.

> The spiritual today is really
> the result of the physical. This is another statement
> in philosophy that may cause a question. The
> spiritual outlook is really a reflection of the
> physical satisfaction or dissatisfaction...Therefore
> in our twentieth century age our spiritual is
> somewhat dependent because of our physical
> needs, because a man can't be a true Christian when
> he is hungry and diseased in mind and body....[161]

Garvey introduced a unique interpretation of the place of physical satisfaction and materialism in leading a Christian life, believing '...the man who is physically happy and satisfied lives next door to heaven' and '...is better able to keep the commandments of life because he is not in need.' His rationale for this was based upon his reasoning that a physically satisfied man '...needs not trick another of the community; he needs not covet his neighbor's wife and goods, because he has everything...he needs not steal because he can buy his goods.'[162] He pointed out how the hungry man is miserable and 'has to expose himself to this world's temptations,' claiming 'He has neglected his body; he has neglected this world's materialism', thus surmising: 'And that is why so many Negroes are miserable because they have neglected the material side of life.'[163]

As one of the more critically discussed areas within his theology, it is evident that Garvey was well aware of the common day to day issues of materialism that oftentimes were not dealt with by theologians as directly as Garvey. Where many theologians promoted an 'escapist' or 'other worldly' doctrine, encouraging blacks to look for the pie in the sky after they die styled approach to the physical conditions and needs faced by

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[161] Ibid.
[162] Ibid.

blacks, Garvey's theology, on the other hand, proved to be very pragmatic in its application to such issues, concerned with practically changing the immediate worldly conditions in a variety of ways. Garvey concluded his thoughts on materialism by proclaiming:

> The Universal Negro Improvement Association is teaching you the way so that you can by your accumulated materialism build your fleets- not the American fleet or flotilla, not the English fleet that sails around the world to maintain Anglo Saxon prestige...but the fleet that shall sail around the world to protect the black man everywhere. That is the materialism that I talk about.[164]

Christ and the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity in Garvey's thought

Garvey firmly believed in the Christian doctrine, professing Christ as 'the begotten Son of God, who came to earth with a special mission to teach humanity how to lift itself back to God. It was for this reason that Christ was born as a man and came to this world.'[165] He described the special mission of Christ and his essential teachings in simple terms:

> The greatest thing Christ taught was love. Love thy neighbor as thyself: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. In these statements are wrapped the highest ideals of a Godhead: as in the relationship of a father and his children. There is no greater philosophy in the history of mankind.[166]

Garvey considered Christ as 'God in man,' to be the perfect sense of mind and soul. Almost poetically, he explained the nature of Christ: 'Christ's spirit was truly God's

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[163] Ibid.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Martin, *Message to the People*. p. 52.
[166] Ibid.

spirit, and his soul, which acted on the advice of God's spirit, was never corrupt.' He described Christ's soul as the 'free-will thought that is similar to the soul free-will thought of all men.'[167] However, Garvey saw how other men with their free-will souls became corrupt and involved in evil ways, even under the guidance of the 'Holy Spirit of God.'

> In every man there is the spirit of God, that is to say, that which is there to advise you and direct you to do good always. In each man also, is the free will soul which is mind. Each may accept the good guidance of the Holy Spirit or refuse to obey entirely.[168]

Garvey had a very practical perception of Christ's life, as a life of example, which intended to show humanity that 'by obedience it can lift itself to the highest soul expression.'[169] In keeping with the Holy Spirit of God, of which humanity is a part by free will, Garvey understood that people themselves could become 'Christ-like.' [170]

He described the nature of the spirit of God in man, believing that it was the soul of man that identified him as a unit of creation:

> In the vilest man, there is the Holy Spirit of God and that man cannot destroy the Holy Spirit of God because that spirit in him is the unit of God that cannot sin and cannot die because it is everlasting goodness.[171]

He believed the thing that sins in man is the man's individual soul, which was mind. Thus he saw human corruption of the mind and soul as rebellion against the God that is within all. Garvey understood the mission of Christ therefore, was to 'redeem humanity from

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[167] Ibid.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid.

sin and place it back on the pinnacle of goodness as God intended.'[172] He exemplified his reasoning of Christ's mission as the human challenge to become Christ-like through emulation.

> There is always a debate with one's self to know what to do. You must analyze your system and your being so completely as to know when you are being advised by the Holy Spirit of goodness and follow that advice. If you can satisfactorily do that, then you can be like Christ and lift yourself to the highest plane of spirit and human life.[173]

It should be noted that Garvey's vision of Christ as the spiritual presence of God manifesting through our human experience as a living example, was also a universal vision for all humanity. His ability to perceive Christ in this way again created the linkage back to his basic ideals of inherent human potentials. He refers to Christ as the spiritual example by which all humanity might be challenged to rise to meet and in doing so creating the possibility for the greatest human equality to exist. These central ideas of human equality through God and Christ, became the prism by which his organizational precepts of racial uplift would essentially be projected.

Understanding the oppressive conditions and degrading stereotypes that shackled black minds, Garvey adapted the fundamental principles of Christianity to the specific needs of black racial uplift. This adaptation demanded a new respect to be given towards the race as possessors of these human qualities shared by all races. In looking at the plight of black people universally, Garvey immediately saw a special relationship that blacks shared with Christ as an oppressed and persecuted people. This special relationship with Christ was supported by similar analogies promoted by Blyden,

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[172] Ibid.

concerning the ideas of the suffering servant and the suffering of the black race along with the symbolic role the African born Simon the Cyraneian played in the crucifixion story. Garvey also identified Europeans among others as the persecutors and enemies of Christ while placing a special emphasis on the property of the cross through Simon, who belonged to the black race.

> In reading Christian literature and accepting the doctrine of Jesus Christ, lay special claim to your association with the Son of God. Show that while the white and yellow worlds, that is to say Europe and Asia minor, persecuted and crucified Jesus the Son of God, it was the Black race through Simon, the Cyraniaen who befriended the Son of God and took up the cross and bore it alongside of Him, up to the heights of Calvary. Therefore, the Roman Catholics have no rightful claim to the cross, nor any other professing Christian, before the Negro makes his claim. The cross is the property of the Negro in his religion because it was he who bore it.[174]

Garvey insisted that the black race had a greater claim to the cross then all other men, affirming the 'suffering servant' parallels between Christ and the persecuted black race. In doing so he also highlighted the destined roles that blacks played in the messianic drama of the crucifixion and resurrection. He confirmed this unique position that blacks held in relationship to Christ testifying:

> ...Oh Jesus the Christ, oh Jesus the Redeemer, when white men scorned you, when white men spurned you, when white man spat upon you, when white men pierced your side out of which blood and water gushed forth . It was a black man in the person of Simon the Cyraniaen, who took the cross and bore it on heights of Calvary and the burden being heavy—Jesus we ask you to help us on the journey up to the heights.[175]

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[173] Ibid., p. 53.
[174] Ibid., p. 15.

As far as Garvey was concerned, Christ was the leader of a mass movement for the uplift of an oppressed people. He explained this on many occasions claiming, 'Christ's doctrine was simple but revolutionary. He laid the foundations of a pure democracy and established the fact not theory of the Universal Brotherhood.'[176]

As with many other black theologians of the day, Garvey sought to recapture the progressive and revolutionary essence of the early Christian movement, in ways that would appeal to the oppressed black masses. His appeals often presented Jesus as one who sided with the unfortunate masses, who were being exploited and oppressed by the privileged few. Of this Garvey taught 'the teaching of Jesus sought to equalize the spiritual and even the temporal rights of man...because he was indeed a great reformer.'[177]

Garvey later proclaimed:

> All true warriors know no fear. Our
> friends are fainthearted, but Jesus
> Christ was the greatest radical the world ever
> saw, Jesus opposed wrong. His program was
> to lift up humanity and save mankind.[178]

He also saw Christ as the great martyr and prime example to inspire blacks to commit themselves to the cause of racial advancement. Garvey relied on different biblical figures along with Christ, to describe the monument and meaning of martyrdom, referring to Moses, who selected the cause to lead the children of Israel from bondage into the

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[175]Quoted from Burkett, *Garveyism as a Religious Movement: The Institutionalization of a Black Civil Religion*, (Trenton, NJ.: Scarecrow Press, 1987), p. 54.
[176] Martin, *Race First*, p. 68.
[177] Burkett, 55.
[178] Ibid.

Promised Land, and David who selected the cause of leading the children of Israel to victory,

> In the great world we have had the men living
> with the cause and the man becoming immortal
> by the cause. [179]

Garvey took the occasion to speak in more detail about the symbolism of martyrdom, making an important connection between the martyrdom of Christ for a cause, and his own organizational call for black racial commitment to the race advancement cause. Garvey believed that if one died in service as Jesus died, the individual would not die the man, but the martyr. 'Christ was crucified', he said, 'not because he was Jesus, but because he was an advocate of the cause. So when he died, he died not as Jesus, but as a martyr to the cause that has lived for over 2,000 years.' [180]

Doctrine of the Holy Trinity

To further demonstrate Garvey's disposition as a theologian, one can also find evidence of the complexity of his theological thought in his fundamental explanation of the doctrine of the Trinity. He described the Holy Ghost as 'the Spirit of God at large.'[181] Here he explained how basically 'everything that can be seen is the spirit of the Holy Ghost'. Garvey asserted 'man can be a complete manifestation of that spirit, for as a unit in him the spirit becomes responsible and lives and acts.'[182]

Garvey believed the Holy Ghost was the perfect spirit of God's intelligence suggesting :

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[179] "Edelweiss Meeting," *Black Man*, 6 July, 1929. p. 5.
[180] Ibid.
[181] Martin, *Message to the People*. p.53.
[182] Ibid.

> God is everywhere in nature, but the spirit of the Holy Ghost is only in the higher thought life, and the highest thought life is men. The Holy Ghost Spirit is always in Men.[183]

Garvey expounded on the concept of the Holy Trinity with as thorough an explanation as any theological scholar, only stating it more so in layman's terms. This again would reflect his ability in keeping theological themes relevant to the everyday language of his followers. Garvey explained:

> The doctrine of the Trinity of God, The Father, The Son and the Holy Ghost, is not commonly understood by the ordinary mind that will not think in the guiding spirit of God. To the mind that thinks with the spirit of God, it is very pleasingly understood that the Godhead is one in three parts; all related, all doing good. You cannot separate them. This may be a mystery which the ordinary intelligence of man cannot explain because man is not God in intelligence, but nevertheless it explains the riddle of the universe.[184]

Other aspects of Garvey's theology are found in more of his own spiritual philosophy of the soul which he was also theologically concerned with. His ideas expressed in the lectures of his *African Philosophy* course in 1939, went on in great lengths, explaining and discussing several important theological issues dealing with the soul, and the spiritual as well as physical cycles in the after life.

Garvey first addressed the confusion of expression between mind, soul and heart, which he claimed, although somewhat separate entities, were all fundamentally related.

> The soul of man is the mind of man, and when we speak of the heart, not the physical thing, but the expressive thing, we mean the soul, which is mind. So always remember that you have a body, which is the physical case for the soul, which is the

[183] Ibid., 54.
[184] Ibid., 54.

> mind; which is the heart in the sentimental
> sense of the heart expressing itself.[185]

He also believed 'the spirit, is greater than all and it is the Holy Ghost and God in man.'[186] His thoughts explored several philosophical ideas concerning the relationship between the spirit and the individual soul suggesting, 'the spirit advises the soul. It guides and guards the soul as when it is disgusted with the behavior of the soul, it leaves the physical body and the physical body dies.'[187] Garvey described the cycle of physical death as it related to the eternal nature of God.

> ...the physical body does not die. It becomes
> matter in another form. Nothing is lost in nature
> and nothing really dies, because everything
> is God's that is eternal and everlasting.[188]

As with the physical body, Garvey also discussed life after death for the soul, believing there was a purpose for good souls in the after life on some higher realm.

> A good soul may pass away in what we call death,
> like a bad soul, but that soul also has an everlasting
> identity that may pass into some higher realm of
> usefulness. I may become an angel or it may be
> used by God in some higher sphere.[189]

Garvey devoted much attention to this aspect of his theology that dealt with the issues of Christ, the doctrine of the Trinity, the soul, mind and spirit of people. His explanations and extensive discussions on these highly pertinent issues represent Garvey as an adept religious thinker, who pursued such religious themes, as would any systematically trained theologian or religious scholar. As a result, his thoughts concerning such spiritual matters, provide reliable windows by which Garvey can be better understood as an active

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[185] Ibid., 55.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid.
[188] Ibid.

theologian, concerned with making relevant his understanding of the Christian faith to the needs of the black race at that time.

Christianity as a Religion

Garvey had strong views on Christianity as a religion in general, making a marked distinction between his ideas of black Christianity and mainstream white Christianity. He considered white Christianity to be synonymous with hypocrisy and assailed black people for 'giving up the world to the white man for the dubious privilege of receiving Jesus.'[190] Garvey charged:

> The white man has the world and gives up Jesus! Don't you know the white man has a right to Jesus too? Jesus belongs to everybody so you are foolish to give up the world and have Jesus only.[191]

The concern for the world in this statement, relates back to his ideas of material needs, in balance with man's spiritual needs, challenging the common white Christian teachings that often promoted ideas of the pie in the sky amongst blacks.

Garvey's accusations of white Christian hypocrisy, was very similar to David Walker's views, some one hundred years earlier. He exposed the double standard by which many white Christians lived, in terms of what they practiced and what they preached in their relationships with black people. He paid particular attention to the violent nature of white Christians and their use of religion to rationalize their violent and oftentimes murderous acts. His thoughts concerning violence and war as anti-Christian in nature, chastised white Christianity for its falsehoods and 'mimicking' of the true Christian doctrine:

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[189] Ibid.
[190] Martin, *Race First.* p. 71.
[191] Ibid.

> Let us look at the world, the so called
> Christian world; the world that mimics
> Christianity: that blasphemes against
> God and will ask us to be righteous. That
> world that is armed to the teeth, with its
> standing armies of shot and shell for what?
> ...What brutes have
> taken the places of men. What mimics of
> Christianity. I wonder if God were to come
> to the world today; if Jesus Christ were to
> come to the world today; what would he
> say to the world of men armed to the teeth
> with aeroplanes battle ships, standing armies
> ready to shoot to death even the Christ himself...[192]

His statements here, reflected his view of the larger geo-political aggression and racism of European and American colonial oppression, who used Christianity as an instrument of oppression, while pointedly revealing the anti-Christian standards of the European rise to global military and social power.

In the attempt to make the fundamental doctrine of the Christian gospel relevant to black people and their experience, Garvey made the clear distinction between the black and white interpretation of Christianity. The distinctions that Garvey made were openly declared in a Negro World editorial written in 1923:

> The Negro is now accepting the religion of the real
> Christ, not the property robbing, gold stealing, diamond
> exploiting Christ, but the Christ of love, Justice and Mercy.
> The Negro wants no more of the white man's religion as it
> applies to his race, for it is a lie and a farce: it is propaganda
> pure and simple to make fools of a race and rob the precious
> world, the gift of God to man and to make it the exclusive home
> of pleasure and prosperity and happiness for those who have
> enough intelligence to realize that God made them masters of
> their fate and architects of their own destiny.[193]

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[192] *Black Man,* 17 August, 1929 p. 13.
[193] *Negro World,* 3 November, 1923. Quoted from Martin. *Race First.* p. 71.

This interpretative stance was the position Garvey believed all blacks needed to take when it came to religion and the gospel of Christianity. Garvey was convinced that blacks would forever be at the mercy of whites if they continued to blindly bow down and worship images and follow the teachings of a white God or a white Christ. According to Garvey, the foisting of a white God onto to the mentality of black people was the means by which whites continued to manipulate the spiritual minds and lives of blacks into a state of oppression.

In Garvey's eyes it was quite normal for people to visualize and depict their gods in their own color, therefore, blacks should depict a God in their own image and likeness. The act of blacks perceiving God in their own likeness reinforced the particular relationship between God, Christ and black people. Garvey incorporated such ideas and imagery into important functions in the U.N.I.A..

At a religious ceremony marking the close of the 1924 International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World, Jesus Christ was canonized as a 'Black Man of Sorrows' and the Virgin Mary as a 'Black Madonna'. The convention also agreed to the idealization of God as a Holy Spirit, without the physical form, but a creature of imaginary resemblance of the black race. This proved to be an important event for the organization along religious lines, illustrating how Garvey's theological ideas represented a new black Christian paradigm, enacted by the U.N.I.A. at the forefront of their movement activities. Garvey explained the act was 'simply correcting the mistake of centuries.'[194]

This tradition of portraying the black 'Heavenly Host' would continue to be re-enforced by Garvey, where on another occasion in a Blackman article of 1929, Garvey

again informed organizational members about the plans to portray the black 'Heavenly Host' for another Convention march, to which he said:

> The procession will be headed by the portrait of Jesus. It will not be a white Jesus, it will not be a brunette Jesus. It will be a black Jesus leading the procession today. The Virgin Mary will not be a blonde Virgin Mary with a little child in her arms, but it shall be a Negro Mary; people were so prejudice against Jesus because he was a man of colour. Because he came as an embodiment of all humanity, and therefore was coloured...we have elected to let Jesus lead the parade of the Negro peoples of the world...[195]

The re-created images of the heavenly host as black, symbolically represented the deliberate efforts of Garvey to shift the Christian paradigm in the minds of black people. The act of changing the mere images, to Garvey was the beginning of a deeper theological change, that would redefine the nature in which the black race would see themselves spiritually and their own significant relationship with God and Christ.

Garvey promoted these theological ideas through his newspapers. A Negro World headline from 1929 read:

> NEGROES OF THE WORLD EVERYWHERE ARE CALLED UPON TO WORSHIP THE GOD OF TRUTH - NOT OPPOSED TO THE RELIGION OF JESUS CHRIST- REFUSE ALIEN TEACHINGS.[196]

The subtitle to the headline expanded more on the religious nature of the organization, highlighting Garvey's particular themes of self-determination in a concerted attempt to reassure the black masses that the organization was not a 'cult'.

> Organization Founded by Marcus Garvey Not An Infidel Association-

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[194] Ibid.
[195] "Convention Proceedings," *Black Man*, 3 August, 1929.
[196] *Negro World*, 7 June, 1929.

> Realizes God Made Man Masters of Their Fate, Architects of Own Destinies- Reserves The Right To Worship In Our Own Way-Demand Our Portion of the World.[197]

Garvey further supported the religious position of the organization with more sound bite statements throughout his publications, in one case literally declaring the purpose behind his religious articles. One such headline read: 'Must meet Propaganda with Propaganda, says President General; Love for Christ Beyond Question.,' clearly showing how Garvey utilized his publication organs as central means of communicating the broader concepts of the organization's religious ideas.

Garvey's warnings against the Europeanized perceptions of Christ remained as integral aspects of his theological approach to Christianity as he saw it relating to black people. To support his new paradigm, Garvey, like so many other black theologians, relied on important hermeneutics based on genealogies and biblical history. Garvey made many firm statements relating to the identity of Christ in racial terms.

> Never admit that Jesus Christ was a white man, otherwise, he could not be the Son of God. Jesus Christ had the blood of all races in his veins and tracing the Jewish race back to Abraham and to Moses from which Jesus sprang from the line of Jesse you will find Negro blood everywhere; therefore, Jesus had mostly Negro blood in him. [198]

These new perceptions of Christ and the heavenly host in Garvey's theology, supported a new forum for black theological discourse and spiritual identification as a people relating to their God. His ideas reclaimed a rich history of black presence as major role players in biblical times, and challenged stereotypes like the Hamitic curse, that for years had been used by whites to legitimize their subjugation of blacks into slavery and oppression

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[197] Ibid.,

through religion. Garvey's emphasized the need for blacks to identify themselves with God and Christ in their own black terms. He believed and quite frankly stated 'if the white man has the idea of a white God, let him worship his God as he desires. If the yellow man's God is of his race let him worship his God as he sees fit. We, as Negroes, have found a new ideal.'[199] Garvey further explained his idea concerning the image of God and how he felt blacks should view God.

> Whilst our God has no color, yet it is human to see people everything through one's own spectacles, and since the white people have seen their God through white spectacles, we have only now started out (late thought it be) to see our God through our own spectacles...We Negroes believe in the God of Ethiopia, the everlasting God-God the Father, God the Son, and 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.[200]

This statement captures one of the most important aspects of Garvey's approach to Christianity, that holistically embodied the race consciousness of his theology. Garvey did not consider God, Christ or Christianity without making direct connections to the cause of the race. The two entities, being religion and racial advancement, were essentially one in Garvey's eyes. To this the great slogan of Garvey rang clear: 'One God, One Aim, One Destiny', again relating to similar ancient Israelite themes of collective spiritual destiny.

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[198] Martin, *Message to the People*, p. 15.
[199] Martin, *The Philosophy and Opinions,* p. 44.

[200] Ibid., 44.

The Sermons of Marcus Garvey

What perhaps provides the most convincing evidence of Garvey being a black theologian, are his many sermons that he actually preached as President General of the UNIA. Many of Garvey's speeches and lectures were filled with religious overtones, expressions and analogies that ultimately made them sermons. There would oftentimes be the occasion where Garvey would actually become 'a man of the cloth' to deliver sermons. These occasions, where Garvey would present actual sermons, usually fell on the high holy days of Christmas and Easter. These religious holiday sermons served as important times in which Garvey addressed the race's liberation efforts in heightened religious terms. The deeper religious meanings of Christmas and Easter, as he related them to the racial struggle, would themselves become symbolic themes by which these sermons were based.

Garvey delivered a Christmas sermon in 1921 where he spoke of the birth of Christ, his mission and its relevance to black people in Garvey's time. Again he discussed Christ's mission to teach man how to live a higher life, in a world where humanity rejected the principles of God. He made direct correlations with the problems faced by Christ and those facing Blacks in 1921. He developed an important analogy concerning the situation of oppression, as he identified the classes of people who crucified Christ were the same oppresses of the contemporary times.

> ...I believe if Christ were to come to the
> world today and preach the doctrine
> he taught 1900 years ago men would still
> crucify Him because conditions have not
> changed-materially, temporally conditions
> have not changed; the same class of people
> who ruled the world when Jesus came- the same
> class of people who crucified Jesus as an impostor

> are the same class of people who rule the world
> today; and the same class of people who refused
> to give an opportunity to the oppressed of mankind.[201]

Garvey also brought to light the special connections the black race had with the Christmas story. In similar ways to that of Crummel and Blyden, who provided historical references of black presence throughout the bible, Garvey saw the importance of the races role in the birth of Christ commenting:

> ...among those who accepted him-among those who
> succored him -among those who helped him were
> men and women of our race. We followed him from
> the stable at Bethlehem to the Cross at Calvary. We
> accepted Him first and we bade him farewell last; and
> I feel sure that we have not changed after knowing God.
> We saw him there 1921 years ago as a babe in the manger
> at Bethlehem and we still see him now as our standard
> bearer.[202]

This special position that the black race held in relation to Christ from birth to death played a critical role in black Christian identification. Connections such as these reconfirmed Garvey's other statements relating to the purpose of existence for the race and their destiny.

Garvey also took the opportunity to preach on Easter as well. The Easter story would hold important themes that Garvey also related to the black struggle, such as the crucifixion of the suffering servant, and the resurrection itself. Both themes served as important metaphors to be used on numerous occasions. On one such occasion, Garvey's Easter sermon subject was called "The Resurrection of the Negro", where he described the subject as fitting for the season. According to Garvey in this sermon, Christ became the 'First Fruit' after triumphing over his crucifixion, his death and the grave. Garvey saw

[201] *Negro World*, 31 December, 1921.

Christ as a man with a program of reformation, who captured 'the attention of the dissatisfied mob who were looking for a leader, a savior, a leader to lead them out of the economic degradation and poverty, a leader that would elevate them to become respectable members of the State.'[203]

Garvey emphasized the parallels between the life of Christ and the black race illuminating how the life of Jesus is typical of the life of the members of the black race. In reference to Jesus' ability to overcome all injustice and persecution through resurrection, Garvey viewed the life Jesus to be 'the proof of how perfect man's life can be in the physical as well as how perfect man's life can be in the spiritual'. Here he explained the resurrection in relation to the black race:

> ... we have Jesus in the resurrection as being
> a perfect body, as being a perfect soul, for he was
> able to overcome Sin, tribulation, suffering, persecution-
> Death itself... It is a splendid lesson, that as a race
> in courage, we can be strong in body and spirit...
> so this race of ours setting out an ideal as high and
> as firm as Christ's, we too can triumph passing
> through to our crucifixion and resurrection.[204]

The resurrection theme was further woven into the U.N.I.A. missionary objectives as well. Garvey never failed to demonstrate how his theology formed essential parts of his organization language. The hope of the UNIA, declared that '400,000,000 Negroes of the world will get to realize that we are about to live a new life-a risen life- a life of knowing ourselves'. Garvey vowed:

> ...the objective of Universal Negro Improvement Association for the
> past four and a half years has been that of guiding us to realize
> that there should be a resurrection in us, and if at
> no other time I trust that as this Easter-tide we

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[202] Ibid.
[203] *Black Man*, 6 April 1929. 2
[204] Ibid.

> realize that there is a great need for a resurrection from the lethargy of the past-the sleep of the past-from that feeling that made us accept the idea and opinion that God intended that we should occupy an inferior place in the world.[205]

The sermon excerpts are but a few examples of Garvey's tendencies as a theologian, showing obvious characteristics shared amongst many black Christian leaders, who formulated interpretations of important biblical events to relate to the immediate lives of oppressed black people through sermons.

Salvation, Redemption and Racial Destiny

Another aspect that draws Garvey into the circle of theologians like Crummel, Blyden and others, were his ideas of racial salvation, redemption and destiny. Garvey, as did his predecessors, developed these ideas as central themes within his theology. For black theologians, salvation and redemption serve as the essential purpose and mission of the Christian faith. In making the link between the Christian purpose and mission and the black liberation struggle, Garvey formulated his own discourse on racial destiny as it related to salvation and redemption of the race. His views on each of these themes would reflect his overarching vision for race advancement, that drew together the essentials of freedom, which included land, race and religion.

Salvation, redemption and destiny, to Garvey at times were synonymous, if not intrinsically linked. The salvation that Garvey spoke about, even though he believed in the judgment of souls in the afterlife, was a salvation of the oppressed black masses in this world, as opposed to a kingdom beyond in the afterlife. Garvey's concern for salvation related to the immediate spiritual and material situation that blacks were in at

the time, and their disconnection from God. He confirmed this disconnection by pointing out the oppressed status of blacks was the result of their failure to recognize the God, and talents within. Salvation would ultimately mean the spiritual awakening of God within blacks as a race and their enactment of the God given talents as the means of their own liberation in this world.

As was noted earlier Garvey's discussions of racial salvation related to his ideas of racial responsibility. Garvey believed God was a God of self-reliance. He thus, challenged blacks to face their own spiritual responsibility for salvation. He insisted that God was not responsible for a race being in or out of slavery, 'the responsibility and the fault has to be placed squarely on the enslaved race itself'[206]

Garvey argued:

> You take yourselves into slavery, and you will
> remain in that state so long as you lack human will.[207]

The importance of racial self-reliance, which Garvey remained so adamant about, could be found rooted in his perception of God. Garvey was convinced that God was 'no respecter of persons', but rather He was a 'God of Absolute impartiality and fairness...Such a God would neither favor a race as superior or condemn a race into slavery.'[208] Garvey directly refuted the Hamitic myth referring again to the black races purpose in creation.

> There is no God who would create me a black man,
> to be a hewer of wood and a drawer of water. It is a lie!
> It is a damned lie! He placed me here as my sovereign
> lord to make life whatsoever I desire to do.[209]

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[205] *Black Man*, 2 May 1929.
[206] *Negro World*, 22 October, 1924. As quoted in Burkett. p. 49.
[207] Ibid.
[208] Ibid.
[209] *Negro World*, March 1924. As quoted in Burkett. p. 29.

Garvey made it consistently clear to blacks that ultimately, their salvation and their destiny was to be found within their own hands. His views resemble those of Crummel, in regards to self-salvation. He saw God's role to be more directly related to spiritual destiny, rather than social or political destiny. He spoke quite bluntly about the issue, in plain terms chastising black people to act in behalf of themselves as a race:

> God is not going to save you. He has done all He could possibly do: He has given you a life to live, and if you do not exercise your own will in your own behalf you will be lost. God does not interfere with the political destiny of races and nations; God is concerned with the spiritual destiny of man not the political destiny of man.[210]

Like so many other black theologians Garvey would also make connections between the struggles of blacks of his day and the struggles of ancient Israel. Among all other themes developed across the stages of the black theological tradition, the analogies made between Israelite captivity and the oppressed black race in the west was one of the most popular hermeneutics. Garvey himself would rely on the parallel in numerous speeches and sermons, making this a critical element within his own theological views of salvation and the black race. In one speech Garvey linked the ideas of racial unity to the Exodus story

> Your life is single as a race because God Almighty created you separate and distinct from others and he shall bring you to account as he brings other races to account even as the Children of Israel when He blessed them quite properly in their exodus. [211]

Garvey drew on other parallels as well such as the book of Psalms, that was used often as a source for analogies. Garvey once said of Psalms, 'if your Psalm singing is from the

[210] *Negro World*, 25 November, 1922. As quoted in Burkett. pp. 29-30.

heart, which is longing for a definite aim with our case, pointing towards the throne of grace, divine power shall work with it- there shall be no force that shall stop us. We shall be invincible...'[212]

Yet another important part of Garvey's ideas about self-salvation included providence. He saw God playing a divine role in the race's situation only when a people were 'prepared' for change. Again, he emphasized self-reliance as the pre-requisite for divine help. Here Garvey discussed God's role,

> ...God has a way of opening
> doors for prepared people, for them to win victory.
> The Israelites in coming out of Egypt were prepared.
> And so he prepared the Red Sea which he divided-
> and they passed on dry land, they crossed the Jordan;
> and brought down the walls of Jericho. God opened
> the way. When you and I are prepared, God is going
> to lead us through his prepared way.[213]

Such statements strengthened the religious connections and parallels between the Israelites and the black race's links through struggle and salvation. Analogies like this reflect the specific ways Garvey's theology addressed salvation for the race at that time. Garvey's thought on salvation also came out in his ideas that he called 'Negro Aspect of Theology' to which he said:

> We want however to link ourselves definitely
> with God to become new creations. God will
> lead us on and with new creation come forth
> the Negro aspect of theology...A new theology
> will assist in that new creation and the Negro has
> yet to give his quota to theology. And it will
> only come when you are on the right road-
> on the warpath of fearing God.[214]

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[211] *Black Man*, 31 August 1929.
[212] Ibid.,
[213] Ibid., p. 3.
[214] "Negros' Attitude Towards the World," *Black Man* 17 August 1929.

Redemption was another significant theme in his theology. Redemption for the race, according to Garvey, involved an integral connection between the liberation of the black race and the liberation of the continent of Africa. Garvey believed the re-generation of Africa would be made possible through the re-unification of African descendents in the west returning to Africa. Upon return, the collective efforts of the race working towards racial advancement and the building of an African empire ultimately culminated in the simultaneous redemption of the people and the land in Garvey's vision. He saw this connection between the land of Africa and the race to be the apex of black redemption that was long over due.

> Africa's day is coming. It is coming in no uncertain manner and the herald is proclaiming it in no uncertain voice. Every man, every race, and every tribe of people all have had their day and Africa's sons and daughters all must have their day.[215]

Redemption in Garvey's rhetoric was destined and often spoken of in prophetic terms, as something yet to come.

> No one knows when the hour of Africa's redemption cometh. It is in the wind, it is coming. One day like a storm it will be here. When that day comes all of Africa will stand together. Therefore we must believe that the Psalmist had great hopes of this race of ours when he prophesied "Princes shall come out of Eygpt and Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands unto God".[216]

Garvey's ideas of redemption related to this world, and was focused on the deliverance and changing of the oppressed black social status as a race.

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[215] *Black Man,* 31 August 1929.
[216] Martin, *Philosophy and Opinions* p. 68.

Central to these visions of redemption, stood Africa, as a symbol of black antiquity, as well as a destined 'promised land'. Garvey shaped the precepts of a black Zionism, tying racial unity and religious destiny to the great past and futuristic meaning of Africa the homeland. He symbolically brought these themes together in a speech subtitled: *UNIA Will Save And Redeem Race Under Ethiopian Star*, where he said, 'You Negroes must close ranks around the world with one determination that you shall follow your one star- the star of Africa on the march to Ethiopia.'[217] Garvey used the symbol of the star, to perhaps represent the cosmological idea of the race's religious destiny, advising blacks to 'be clothed in conviction. Let no one persuade you to the star of Bethlehem or the star of America or Europe.' Garvey's vision was solely on Africa. He made use of the symbolism of the 'African Star' further into this same speech on racial redemption.

> Let your star be Africa's shining star because you were created
> under that planet-Magnificently , grandly, graciously
> with God's blessing and with God's Benediction.
> There is no reason therefore that you should turn
> away from this star.[218]

The ideas of salvation and redemption both involved the notion of destiny in Garvey's theology, another theme he would also rely on in many of his speeches. Destiny in Garvey's theology, referred to the divine fate of the race inspired and set in motion by God. In one of Garvey's editorials published in the Negro World, he referred to destiny as a divine personification of God and time, as he described the 'Voice of Destiny calling to the Negro race.' In this instance, time represented the age or moment in history by which Garvey saw the race being called forth by God for salvation and redemption. He

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[217] "Edelweiss Park Meeting," *Black Man*, 22 June 1929
[218] Ibid.

saw his contemporary time as a time for great racial opportunity, and even related this to his ideas of God given talents within, as he once posed the rhetorical question, 'What period of life here below was ever so pregnant with opportunities for the expression of the God-given powers of a people?'[219] Garvey saw the current times to be like no other. He considered it to be a divine time marked by the call of God,

> Not even in a time to which mind runneth back was
> there ever so undeniably a calling to any race, any tribe,
> any nation by the Great Supreme Spirit of
> Creation, as the call which comes today to the
> Negro Peoples of the World.[220]

The tones of his ideas were almost apocalyptic in nature, which gave the sense of religious urgency of changes to come. The apocalyptic thought like Garvey's can be traced back, to early religious activist like Turner, defining an important characteristic found across the various stages of the black theological tradition.

Garvey believed God was calling the race towards a destiny of salvation,

> ...onward, forward, upward to the great tasks at hand,
> to the achievements of the deeds, the likes of which
> mankind has never attained before, to the carving out
> for ourselves a destiny that is best suited to our own
> development and the development of our children's children.[221]

It is important to note that in Garvey's terms destiny, in part, meant to be 'inspired' by God towards a preordained goal, but the manifestation of destiny in itself, was to be enacted by the race. The 'carving out' of the race's own destiny essentially returned to his idea of self-salvation.

The advancement of the race in religious terms would ultimately include all three of the concepts, which he charismatically wove into his speeches to create the religiously

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[219] " When the Crises Comes," *Negro World*, 24 August.
[220] Ibid.

inspired activism he fought to produce. The culmination of Garvey's philosophical religious ideas and his social plan for racial advancement reflected the untiring hope and vision he had for his race. He surmised the essence of his theology in a prophetic statement concerning the salvation, redemption and destiny of the race and Africa

> We move forward to the realization of our hopes; to the freedom of the race and the redemption of Africa. Nerved by the Great Good Father of all creation, we step boldly to carve out a new destiny... And looking with prophetic vision down the years as they come and go, all creation rises up and tells us that "this great race of Negroes shall not die, Till Africa is Free."[222]

What made Garvey unique among the many black theologian activists prior and contemporary to himself, was his ability to successfully implement his theology into the infrastructure of his organizational movement, making his movement one of the largest religiously inspired movements amongst blacks in modern times.

Garvey's theological ideas had strong parallels with the ideologies of theologians that preceded him. He successfully fused his theology black into the pragmatic political and economic apparatus of the U.N.I.A.. Garvey's position as a theologian, at this particular stage in the evolving traditions, served not only as a window by which he synthesized earlier black Christian ideals into a powerful nationalist movements, but he also laid the ground work by which religio-nationalist movements such as the Rastafarians and the Nation of Islam would later emerge in more contemporary times.

As a theologian in his own right, Garvey stands as an unavoidable figure contributing to the rich legacy of black theology, as it has grown in the West.

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[221] Ibid.

Perhaps the centrality of his own Christian thought and visions for racial liberation is best embodied in his own words and poetry where Garvey once wrote:

> You can worship God by yourself.
> You are responsible to God by yourself.
> You have to live your own soul before God.
> Nobody can save your soul. Others may advise
> you on how to shape your soul; because of your
> ignorance of life. Keep in communion with God.
> No one but you can save your soul; in your soul
> lies relationship with God. Therefore, always worship
> with your own heart, soul and mind when you want
> to commune with God. Make your heart, soul and
> mind your altar...[223]

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[222] Ibid.
[223] Martin, *Message to the People*, pp. 56-57.

CONCLUSION

In canvassing the various stages and developments of black Christian theology from the late 18th century to the advent of the Garvey movement in the 20th century, the activities of the black theologian and activists responsible for propelling black Christianity came to include a diverse range of religiously inspired individuals. The personalities described as theologians in this study, introduced new theological ideas and hermeneutics that focused on religious redemption and advancement of the black race, into a western theological experience, that has not fully considered the impact and implications of black Christian thought. The suggestion that the religious activists discussed in this paper are indeed some of the most dynamic theologians spanning many centuries, inspires a re-examination of theology as it is played out under different cultural settings and social circumstances.

Within the context of the black Christian experience, a distinct theological tradition has emerged, spearheaded by a variety of religiously inspired activists, who rose at various times from as early as the 1700's. These Christian leaders produced diverse theological ideas that included such themes as: religious autonomy and self-determination; community charity; the affirmation of black presence in biblical history; ideas of self or racial salvation, redemption, racial destiny as well as apocalyptic and eschatological ideas, all representing the resilient religious thought of this era.

The earliest developments in black theology are identified with George Leile and Richard Allen and their roles founding the first independent black churches. The establishment of churches in Savannah, Philadelphia and Kingston stand as defining moments in the currents of Christian history in the Americas. The theological

implications behind such actions involved first and foremost the visions for religious autonomy. Both Allen and Leile realized and preached a theology related to the special spiritual and social needs of black people at that time. The quest for religious autonomy signified belief in self-administered faith and brought about early institution building. The first black churches also served as the first black social institutions and platforms that addressed the religious, educational, economic, and social issues of the day. Allen and Leile's church programming offered outreach in each of these areas to their congregations and communities, reflecting a theology concerned most with the practical teachings of the faith through activism. Emphasis on morals, community charity and service to God, were fundamental staples within both men's theological ideas. The spirit of the independent church and the freedom of black religious autonomy inaugurated an era of black self-determination that might suggest it to be an early form of Black Nationalism. The life works of these two theologians in their fight to bring the Chrisitan faith to black people, battled the holocaust of slavery, and cleared a path for generations of black theologians to follow.

The black Christian element against slavery, gained momentum and eventually became radicalized by certain black theologians who took black theology to another level. David Walker, Nat Turner, Sam Sharpe and Paul Bogle were living examples of new black Christian militancy that arose within the ranks of the fight against slavery and oppression. The abolishment of slavery took on religious meaning among black freedom advocates. The theological language, ideas and actions of these particular men reflected a far more militant theology that involved apocalyptic and eschatological themes found in *David Walker's Appeal* and the *Confessions of Nat Turner.* The bloody rebellions of Sam

Sharpe and Paul Bogle reflected the role of the religious leadership and the willingness of activists to die for their religious causes through open rebellion and revolt. From the 1830's through the 1860's some of the most violent uprisings in North America and the Caribbean, were led by radicalized black Christian activists. The theological ideas attached to the anti-slavery movement became the religious rationale and explanation for extreme action. Important connections and parallels were made between the black experience in bondage with the bondage of the ancient Israelites. The apocalyptic and eschatological notions saw "the end of days" or "judgment" to be the end of slavery. In the varying events that surrounded the militancy of this time period, at the center of these men's visions and actions was a theology concerned with the deliverance of a people.

The wide spread influence of Black Nationalism during the mid to late 1800s, had an impact on black theology, as did black theology have an impact on the nationalism. Alexander Crummel and Edward Blyden became two noted theologians who introduced the fusion of Black Nationalism and black theology. As religious men, and black nationalists, their theological ideas were concerned with racial recovery and advancement. According to these men, the nationalist ideas of self-determination were described in the theological terms of self-salvation and service to God and race. Calls for racial unity and emigration back to Africa were articulated in terms of religious racial destiny and redemption. Crummel and Blyden made great emphasis on the black race and biblical history, highlighting the parallel struggles of Israelites and their own people. Crummel's theology envisioned the redemption of the race would come through Providence and acts of self-salvation. He believed blacks in the west could not only redeem themselves and Africa, but the American civilization as well. Blyden worked out

similar visions for a universal black redemption through emigration. His emigration and nation building in plans Liberia involved important sociological educational and economic programs that all fell under his theology of racial destiny. Blyden also developed symbolic analogies of racial recovery and advancement, referring to the race as Christ like "suffering servants", bearing the persecution and suffering of racism as the same sacrifice that Christ made for humanity. The religious nationalism of Crummel and Blyden exhibited a form of Black Zionism, connecting a people as a nation, the land of Africa and their God that would have an profound impact on many leaders especially Marcus Garvey.

Garvey stands out as a distinct figure among these other theologians, embodying many of his predecessors theological ideas while developing his own theology and using it as the basis for his organizational ideology for racial uplift. The theological underpinnings of Garvey's organizational doctrine and activities included the ideas of Providence, religious autonomy, self-salvation and racial destiny. Garvey too, had a very practical theology that spoke of the race's religious purpose in creation, responsibility unto God, and the spiritual work ethics of self-reliance. His universal vision for racial unity described in his African Fundamentalism, as a form of religious destiny demonstrates the integral role his theology played within his broader organizational doctrine and activities. Through his many sermons, writings and reflections on religion and the Christian faith, Garvey remains as one of the most prolific theologians of the 20th century.

Collectively, the ideas and developments explored here, bring to the forefront the African American and Caribbean religious experiences that represent challenging issues

to be considered in the broader areas of American and western European religious studies. Moving the early black Christian theological developments from the marginalized "other experience," to the center of multidisciplinary discourse allows additional avenues to be considered in the broader investigations of theological developments in the west. In particular are the issues of race, and how black Chrisitian experiences under the brutal circumstances of slavery and oppression, impacted the interpretation process and relationship between the Christian scriptures and blacks in ways far different from any other experience in western Christendom. This focus serves as a critical window to better understand the different ways Christian theology has functioned in western American society and culture, and the historical role black theologians have played in redefining it.

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