

Messianic Expectation in Rastafari

Theology and Religious Studies

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Abstract:

This dissertation explores messianic expectation in Rastafari and the connection between these ideas and the Hebrew Bible's prophetic texts. The effect of colonialism is also considered throughout this dissertation in order to better understand the religions involved and their relationship with the Messiah. Firstly, the status of the Hebrew Bible in Rastafarian thought has been founded by studying select aspects of Rastafarian tradition and how the Hebrew Bible has influenced these ideas. Following this, what is expected of the messiah through Orthodox Judaism and Catholicism's reading of the Hebrew Bible's prophetic texts, in particular Zechariah 9 and Isaiah 9, has been discussed. This presented who the interpreted messianic figure of the Hebrew Bible is expected to be and the role they are meant to fulfil.

Once these expectations of the Messiah, that have been interpreted from the Hebrew Bible, have been established it can then be seen how these ideas relate to Haile Selassie's messiahship. The findings of this dissertation presents that, in certain mansions of Rastafari, the Hebrew Bible is significantly influential when understanding who the Messiah is and what is expected of him. Haile Selassie's messiahship is increasingly influenced by the Hebrew Bible's notions of an understood messianic figure. This also suggests that the Hebrew Bible has a significant status in particular mansions of Rastafari.

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Introduction

The aim of this dissertation is to explore the connection and influence of the Hebrew Bible on Rastafarian thought concerning the messianic figure. For several branches, or mansions, of Rastafari this messianic figure is understood as Haile Selassie, former Emperor of Ethiopia in the 1930s.¹ This dissertation will explore how Haile Selassie's messiahship has been influenced by the messianic figure that is understood to be seen in the Hebrew Bible's prophetic texts. For the purpose of this research, Zechariah 9:9 and Isaiah 9:6-7 will be studied as to understand what these passages suggest about a future messianic figure. I hope to demonstrate how the messianic ideas presented in these texts have influenced messianic expectation.

The literature surrounding the topic of the Messiah in the Hebrew Bible is significant and contains several debates regarding if there even is a messianic figure. The work of Cohn-Sherbok is a comprehensive, in-depth study of this figure in the Hebrew Bible and presents several examinations of select passages and what they contribute to the understanding of the Messianic figure.² This is also seen in the body of literature surrounding how this perceived messianic figure is mirrored in the New Testament. The works of Barry Chevannes, Horace Campbell, and Ennis Edmonds have contributed the body of academic literature surrounding Rastafarian tradition and belief. These works provide in depth analysis of the history of the Rastafari tradition, as well as the beliefs and practise of these mansions. However, the literature surrounding Rastafarian tradition and thought requires more contributions, notably in regard to the place of the Hebrew Bible and its significance of the Hebrew Bible. Work

¹ J. H Spencer, *'Ethiopia at Bay: A Personal Account of the Haile Selassie Years'*, (Hollywood: Tsehai Publishers and Distributors 2006), p. 15.

² D Cohn-Sherbok, *'The Jewish Messiah'*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1997).

surrounding Rastafari pay particular attention to the political and African influences of the Religion, such as the work of Horace Campbell that does speak on the Hebrew Bible but primarily focuses on the social and political foundations of Rastafarian thought.³ However, Edmonds works do present an evaluation of the Hebrew Bible's status in Rastafarian thought.⁴ However, the research for this dissertation presents that this topic does require more exploration and discussion in academic literature. This is also demonstrated in Chevannes work that focuses on the history and social place of Rastafarian tradition.⁵ While this is a profoundly important aspect of Rastafarian thought the influence of the Hebrew Bible requires more investigation and study. This dissertation will aim to explore this relationship between the Hebrew Bible and Rastafarian beliefs and traditions.

This dissertation will also consider the impact of post-colonialism while studying the Messiah in Rastafarian thought. This is important to consider as the colonial government "continue[s] to haunt the colonial society long after the colonial power withdraws."⁶ This is presenting that the impact of colonialism is so profound that it continues to impact the society affected even when the government is no longer in control. This highlights the idea that colonialism has a long lasting profound effect on the societies that are impacted by these colonial powers. This, by extension, suggests that a part of these societies that are continually affected is religious life. This is supported as the cultures that are victims to colonialism are understood to suffer as their "religions, languages, literature, fine arts, etc. are devalued."⁷ Thus, it can be understood that colonialism is an important aspect to consider when studying religion in a

³ H, Campbell, 'Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney', (London: Hansib Publishing Limited 1985).

⁴ E Edmonds, 'Rastafari: A Very Short Introduction', (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012).

⁵ B Chevannes, 'Rastafari: Roots and Ideology', (New York: Syracuse University Press 1994).

⁶ M Naidu, 'Race, Religion, Sex and Colonialism: The Four Impediments to Peace Education', *Peace Research*, 26(6) (1994), pp. 1-21.

⁷ Naidu, 'Race, Religion, Sex and Colonialism: The Four Impediments to Peace Education', pp. 1-21.

society that has been affected by the long term effects of colonial government. This influence and affect will be considered when discussing Rastafarian tradition and beliefs.

Firstly, the chapter, *The Hebrew Bible in Rastafarian Tradition*, will discuss the influence and status of the Hebrew Bible in Rastafarian tradition and lifestyle. It will study how the Hebrew Bible has impacted Rastafari lifestyle and how it impacts life in the Rastafarian tradition. This will be demonstrated by exploring the tradition of Ital food laws, the attitude to menstruation amongst the Buba Shanti community and the keeping of dreadlocks amongst members of Rastafari. These were selected as they allow for an insight into the Hebrew Bible's influence in Rastafari thought in an everyday capacity. These traditions affect how a member of the community would understand their religious lifestyle and their relationship to their religion. In order to discuss this the works of Ennis Edmonds and Horace Campbell will be discussed in relation to Ital food laws amongst the members of Rastafari and if this is influenced by the Book of Leviticus, as well as what this suggests about the Hebrew Bible's status in Rastafari. In order to study the Buba Shanti communities understanding of menstruation the ideas of Obiagale Lake and Barry Chevannes will be discussed as to understand how this attitude to menstruation is influenced by the Hebrew Bible and what this presents about the Hebrew Bible's involvement in the profoundly personal lives of the women in this community. Finally, when examining the importance of keeping dreadlocks the connection between this tradition and the Book of Numbers will be considered. As well as keeping dreadlocks connection to social rebellion and justice.

Secondly, the chapter, *Messianic Expectation in the Hebrew Bible*, will explore how the Hebrew Bible's prophetic texts of Zechariah 9:9 and Isaiah 9:6-7 have been read as presenting a future messianic figure. These texts have been selected as they highlight several important

aspects of messianic expectation in Orthodox Judaism and Catholicism. Dan Cohn-Sherbok and Walter Rose Harper, also, present several interpretations of these passages and the messianic ideas that they present. This is important to discuss as it is necessary to understand the messianic figure that is interpreted from these texts and what this figure suggests for the Orthodox Jewish community. The Orthodox Jewish community will be studied as the community has been seen to support the belief of the Messiah in Judaism as The Orthodox Jewish Congregational Union of America in 1898 stated that they “reaffirm [their] belief in the coming of a personal Messiah.”⁸ To allow for an in depth study of these ideas Catholicism will also be considered as it allows for a more concise discussion. In order to fully examine these texts three themes of what is expected of the future Messiah have been identified. These themes include the kingship of the Messiah, the Messiah’s role as a source of social justice and the Messiah as a fulfilment of the Hebrew Bible. Before discussing if Haile Selassie’s messiahship has been influenced by the ideas surrounding the messianic figure of the Hebrew Bible, it is necessary to first understand this figure and the ideas surrounding them.

Finally, Haile Selassie’s messiahship and the influence of the Hebrew Bible on messianic expectation in Rastafarian thought will be explored. This will be demonstrated in the final chapter, *Messianic Expectation in the Rastafarian Thought*, which aims to explore Haile Selassie’s messiahship and its relationship to the messianic figure interpreted from the Hebrew Bible. This will be studied by following the three themes of messianic expectation discussed in chapter two’s research. These themes will be how Haile Selassie is expected to be a royal figure from the line of David, a source of social and political change as well as justice and how he is expected to be a fulfilment of the Hebrew Bible’s prophecies. Haile Selassie’s

⁸ G Robinson, *Essential Judaism: A Complete Guide to Beliefs, Practices, and Rituals*, 2nd edn., (New York: Atria Paperback 2016), p. 554.

messiahship will be explored in connection to these themes and what it suggests about his connection with the Hebrew Bible.

Chapter One: The Hebrew Bible in Rastafarian Tradition

Introduction

Before discussing the diverse topic of the Messiah, as well as what is expected of them in Rastafarian thought, it is important to establish and understand the influence of the Hebrew Bible in Rastafarian lifestyle, as well as tradition. Ennis Edmonds work, '*Rastafari: A Very Short Introduction*'⁹ and Horace Campbell's '*Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney*'¹⁰, presents several examples of the influence of the Hebrew Bible on traditions such as; Ital food laws, Menstruation and the keeping of dreadlocks. This is an important topic to first discuss, as it allows for ideas of the importance of the Hebrew Bible and how the Hebrew Bible is understood in Rastafari thought, as well as everyday life. Firstly, the tradition and understanding of Ital food laws will be studied to understand the Hebrew Bible's influence on this tradition, as well as what it suggests about its importance. This will be studied by exploring the ideas of Ital food, attitudes to menstruation and attitudes towards dress and hair care. It is important to recognise the diversity amongst Rastafari traditions and mansions when discussing the traditions of the faith, as different groups, or Mansions, may approach these traditions differently and with a variety of attitudes. Edmonds highlights the diversity amongst the mansions and communities of Rastafari in relation to Ital food laws.¹¹ This is an example of the diversity in how these traditions are kept. Firstly, the tradition and understanding of Ital food laws will be studied to understand the Hebrew Bible's influence on this tradition, as well as what it suggests about its importance. Secondly, attitudes toward menstruation will be explored and how this presents the Hebrew Bible as having an intimate

⁹ Edmonds, '*Rastafari: A Very Short Introduction*'.

¹⁰ Campbell, '*Rasta, and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney*'.

¹¹ Edmonds, '*Rastafari: A Very Short Introduction*', p. 47-48.

connection to Rastafarian women's lives. This can be seen by studying how menstruation is affected by the laws of Leviticus and how this affects a Rastafarian woman's understanding of herself, her religion, and her daily lifestyle. This will be studied by observing the works of Obiagale Lake and what this work suggests about women's menstruation and its relationship to the Hebrew Bible. Finally, attitudes towards hair and the significance of growing dreadlocks, for some communities, will be studied. It is necessary to discuss the place of the Hebrew Bible in Rastafari thought as it can be seen if it influences personal, everyday choices and by influencing these choices it may also affect the worldview and attitudes to lifestyle, each other and how Rastafarians experience the world. It is also important to establish how influential the Hebrew Bible is before studying the theological concept of the messiah and how it has influenced beliefs around the messiah. It is to be seen how influential the Hebrew Bible is in Rastafarian tradition and how this affects its status.

Ital Food Laws

Ital food is commonly understood as the food laws, or as Campbell states, "the food policy"¹², that governs what can and cannot be eaten in Rastafarian tradition and practice. Leviticus 11, as explained by Edmonds, is a key influence in the laws that regulate food and what food is forbidden.¹³ Leviticus 11 is commonly discussed in relation to the Kosher laws in Judaism¹⁴, it has an everyday influence and impact on the lives of Rastafari as it discusses what can and cannot be eaten. These Ital food laws are different from Kosher laws as Ital food is more focused on food that is pure or clean, "foods that are not denatured by processing, additives or contaminated."¹⁵ Ital Food does contain some similarities to Kosher as Leviticus 11 states

¹² Campbell, *'Rasta, and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney'*, p.6.

¹³ Edmonds, *'Rastafari: A Very Short Introduction'*, pp. 47-8.

¹⁴ H Rabinowicz and R.M. Geffen, 'Dietary Laws', *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 5(2) (2007), pp. 650 – 659.

¹⁵ 'Ital Kitchen', *The Beat*, 5(2) (1986), p.39.

that pigs are “unclean” and that “anything in the seas or the streams that does not have fins and scales is detestable to you” (Lev. 11:7-13). These animals are not to be eaten as they are not permitted and, in some cases, are unclean. This is mirrored in Rastafari thought as “Rastas are basically vegetarian, rarely eating meat and strictly prohibiting pork, shellfish and scaleless fishes.”¹⁶ This highlights the connection between Rastafari food laws and the Hebrew Bible. Although there is a variant to how strictly Rastafarian people follow these food laws Edmonds presents that while some follow these laws into “strict veganism” most followers abide by some form of Ital and Ital food.¹⁷ This suggests that Ital food laws are a significant, everyday aspect of the Rastafarian experience as what food is and is not forbidden affects everyday lifestyle choices. The idea that most Rastafarian people follow a form of the Ital food laws suggests that the Hebrew Bible has an important status in Rastafarian thought, as it influences something that affects everyday life and attitudes to food. Food laws are an important aspect of lifestyle and the experience of the everyday. The Hebrew Bible is influencing this experience and affecting attitudes towards certain foods as unclean or unlawful.

Attitudes to Menstruation

Menstruation is a significant and personal aspect of a woman’s health and experiences. In the following menstruation will be discussed in relation to the Hebrew Bible in Rastafarian thought, and how its interpretation affects attitudes surrounding menstruation. This is important to discuss as it effects how the people interact with women and how they interact with each other. Campbell states that Leviticus is widely used amongst Rastafarian

¹⁶ Edmonds, *‘Rastafari: From Outcasts to Culture Bearers’*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003), Chapter 3.

¹⁷ Edmonds, *‘Rastafari: A Very Short Introduction’*, p. 47-48.

communities to adapt attitudes towards women as he claims that “biblical justification is used” when discussing women’s topics.¹⁸ Obiaga Lake presents the example of the Buba Shanti community in Jamaica and their attitudes to menstruation. Lake explains that the “Buba Shanti women are excluded within a restricted area during their menstruation,” as they are understood to be polluted.¹⁹ This belief and tradition has been influenced by the writings of Leviticus 12, where the text discussed the purification of women after childbirth and states that “she shall be ceremonially unclean seven days; as at the time of her menstruation” (Lev. 12:2-3). This tradition can be seen to impact how the women of this community relate to menstruation, as well as how others in the community would view them during this period as they are excluded from the community and are ceremonially unclean. Although this is an example from one community of Rastafari, it is important to discuss as it presents an example of the Hebrew Bible significantly impacting the attitudes towards Rastafarian women and how they are treated in their community. This idea highlights the influence the Hebrew Bible has on an intimately significant aspect of a woman’s life and lifestyle. Women belonging to this community are affected by the laws of the Hebrew Bible, and their interpretation, in their everyday life as it affects her role in the community, as she is also not allowed to cook.²⁰ This also affects how these women understand their daily experiences and their experiences of life in the community and as a member of the religion.

Menstruation is, therefore, another example that furthers the idea that the Hebrew Bible has a significant impact on the daily lives of the Rastafarian community. This presents that the Hebrew Bible has a significant status in Rastafari thought, as it profoundly impacts the women

¹⁸ Campbell, *‘Rasta, and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney’*, p. 199.

¹⁹ O Lake. ‘The Many Voices of Rastafarian Women: Sexual Subordination in the Midst of Social Liberation’, *New West Indian Guide*, 68(3-4) (1994), p.244.

²⁰ Chevannes, *‘Rastafari: Roots and Ideology’*, p. 259.

in the Buba Shanti community and their overall experiences of life. Although, it is important to highlight that this tradition is specifically linked to the Buba Shanti community and may not reflect the views and traditions of other mansions and communities of Rastafari.²¹ However, it is still important to discuss the effect of this belief and how it affects attitudes to menstruation amongst this community, as it is a deeply personal aspect of life that influences and impacts the women of this community and the detail of their experiences of religion and life overall. Lake presents several interviews with women in Rastafari communities who see this period as a time of purification and a way of expressing their religion.²² This mirrors the idea that the Hebrew Bible has a profound link to the intimate experience of menstruation as these women see their time away from the community as a way of expressing their devotion and religious duty.

Dress and Hair

The way a person presents themselves and their faith is an extremely important aspect of everyday religious and an individual's life. Religious dress and presentation acknowledges the "the deep commitments that manifestations of religion/belief may represent."²³ Hair and how it is kept remains an important aspect of Rastafarian culture. Peter Clarke describes cultivating locks within the Rastafarian tradition as "biblically inspired and also in accordance with the laws of nature."²⁴ Clarke is highlighting the origins of the beliefs surrounding the growing of dreadlocks in the Book of Numbers, as he also states that growing dreadlocks is

²¹ Chevannes argues that several communities do not view menstruation as unclean but when a woman is under the influence of powers she cannot control.

²² Lake. 'The Many Voices of Rastafarian Women: Sexual Subordination in the Midst of Social Liberation', pp.243-4.

²³ P Cumper and T Lewis, 'Empathy and Human Rights: The Case of Religious Dress', *Human Rights Law Review*, 18 (1) (2018), pp. 61-87.

²⁴ Peter B. Clarke, *'Black Paradise: The Rastafarian Movement'*, (Wellingborough: The Aquarian Press 1986), pp. 89 – 90.

“one of the signs” of a covenant with God.²⁵ Numbers 6, presents the emphasis on growing out hair in the Hebrew Bible;

“Vow no razor shall come upon the head: until the time is completed for which they separate themselves to the Lord, they shall be holy; they shall let the locks of the head grow long” (Num. 6:5-6).

This passage, as Clarke presents, heavily influences the growing of dreadlocks within the Rastafarian tradition and its importance as a symbol of connectedness to God. Charles Price explains that several groups of Rastafari view dreadlocks as a necessity to the Rastafarian identity and an example of “making physically tangible their covenant” with God.²⁶ This suggests that dreadlocks are a way for those who follow the Rastafarian tradition to connect spiritually to God, or Jah, and a symbol of their faith. This further highlight that dreadlocks are thus a significant aspect of Rastafari and their faith as it allows for a way to prove their connection to God and is a significant part of their religious identity and dress.

The notion that the Book of Numbers provides a reference and law concerning hair and its connection to spirituality, highlights how the Hebrew Bible influences and affects how Rastafarian followers experience spirituality and connect to God. This furthers the idea that the Hebrew Bible has an important status in Rastafarian tradition, as it affects how followers experience their spirituality and allows them to connect to God and prove their covenant with him. Although, dreadlocks have also been understood in Rastafarian tradition as a symbol of rebellion. Chevannes argues that while dreadlocks in the Rastafarian tradition are a

²⁵ Clarke, *'Black Paradise: The Rastafarian Movement'*, pp. 89-90.

²⁶ Charles Price, *'Becoming Rasta: Origins of Rastafari Identity in Jamaica'*, (New York: New York University Press 2009), p. 168.

“professor of the faith” they also “undermined the racial values of the colonial status quo.”²⁷

Clarke states that another reason that Rastafari keep dreadlocks is because it allows them to “explain who and what they are by form of symbolic confrontation.”²⁸ This idea challenges that dreadlocks emphasise the status of the Hebrew Bible in Rastafarian tradition as it instead poses that dreadlocks are a way to socially rebel and liberate those who choose to keep them.

Conclusion

Through the examples of Ital food laws, attitudes to menstruation and the importance of dreadlocks to certain branches of Rastafari, it can be understood that the Hebrew Bible holds a significant place in Rastafarian tradition. This is seen as the Hebrew Bible can be argued to influence significant aspects of faith and tradition. Food laws are an aspect of faith and tradition that is interwoven into everyday life and practices. Ital food, thus, is an important aspect on practicing faith in everyday life as it is something that affects the lifestyle of those who follow its laws. These laws and tradition can be seen to have developed from a reading of Leviticus 11 and its laws on unclean and untouchable foods. Likewise, menstruation and attitudes toward it, greatly affect the lifestyle and the experience of the world that women have. These attitudes can be affected by religious belief and thus impact women’s relationships to their religion and towards others. This is presented through the Buba Shanti community, where women live apart from the community during their menstrual period. This presents an example of the Hebrew Bible impacting an intimate and personal aspect of an individual’s faith, as it can be understood that this community is influenced by the purity laws of Leviticus 11. This further supports the argument that the Hebrew Bible has a significant

²⁷ Chevannes, *‘Rastafari: Roots and Ideology’*, p. 144-5.

²⁸ Clarke, *‘Black Paradise: The Rastafarian Movement’*, p. 90.

place in Rastafarian tradition as it impacts how those in the community understand each other and how they understand a deeply personal aspect of themselves. Although it must be understood that this is an example of one community and while it is still important to discuss, it does not reflect all the mansions and branches of Rastafari. Finally, the importance of dreadlocks in Rastafarian tradition and dress can also be seen to present the significance of the Hebrew Bible. Numbers 6:5-6 states that it is important for an individual not to cut their hair and Clarke connects this passage to the tradition of keeping dreadlocks and how it is understood by some as a way to symbolise their connection and covenant with God. However, it may also be understood that for some who follow the Rastafarian tradition dreadlocks are an example of social rebellion and liberation more so than a religious example. This presents the idea that while the Hebrew Bible has a significant status in Rastafarian tradition it is not the only key influence, as social rebellion and social liberation remain important. Overall, the Hebrew Bible can be understood to have a significant place in Rastafarian tradition as it affects every day, personal and religious lifestyle as seen through the examples of Ital food, Menstruation in the Buba Shanti community and the growing of dreadlocks as a sign of a covenant with God. The next Chapter of this Dissertation, 'Messianic Expectation in the Hebrew Bible', will discuss the messianic figure of Zechariah and Isaiah and their interpretations. This will be explored by studying the interpretation of Zechariah 9 and Isaiah 9 and what they suggest is expected of the Messiah figure in Jewish and Christian thought.

Chapter Two: Messianic Expectation in the Hebrew Bible

Introduction

This chapter will focus on ideas surrounding messianic expectation in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, as well as what this suggest about the role and the meaning of the Messiah in Judaism and Christianity. The books of Zechariah and Isaiah will be studied to highlight what they suggest about the Messiah and the Messiah's role, as well as how these ideas have impacted Jewish and Christian thought. To understand the Messiah's role and messianic expectation in Judaism and Christianity, it is important to recognize the root of these ideas in the Hebrew Bible. The prophetic texts of the Hebrew Bible are significant to this idea as they present ideas of the future. For example, Dan Cohn-Sherbok explains that the prophets had consistent themes of hope and "future redemption."²⁹ Thus, it is important to consider the prophets when discussing the ideas of the Messiah in Judaism and Christianity, as these texts influence how these faiths understand the messianic figure and what roles they are expected to fulfil. It is also important to note that the ideas concerning the Messiah in the Hebrew Bible are "widely divergent,"³⁰ and there is no one image of the Messiah in the Hebrew Bible, but references to a future figure, as seen in Zechariah 9 and Isaiah 9:6-7. It is important to acknowledge this before discussing the portrayals surrounding the Messiah in the prophetic texts. In the following chapter, three key themes will be discussed in relation to what is expected of the Messiah and how these are understood through the examples of Zechariah and Isaiah, particularly focusing on Zechariah 9:9 and Isaiah 9:6-7.

Before discussing Zechariah 9:9 and Isaiah 9:6-7 and these themes, it is important to understand the context of the writing of Zechariah and Isaiah. Isaiah is commonly understood

²⁹ D Cohn-Sherbok, 'The Jewish Messiah', (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1997), p.1.

³⁰ S Lamerson, 'The Jewish Messiah', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 43(1) (2000), p.131

amongst scholarship to have been written during the lead up to the Assyrian Empires rule over Jerusalem in 735 B.C.E.³¹ The Book of Zechariah is said to have been written during the rule of Darius the Great and the Persian Empire in 520 B.C.E.³² This suggests that both of these texts were written during a time of outside pressures and powers and presents the idea that the authors and audiences that these works were written for would have been concerned with this and the issues surrounding it. John Goldingay highlights that is important to understand what Isaiah meant in relation to its historical context.³³ This presents the notion that it is important to understand the context Isaiah, and by extension Zechariah, was written in as to understand its meaning it is necessary to understand who these texts were being written for. In this dissertation post-colonialism will be studied as colonialism can be understood to have a profound impact on religious traditions. This is supported as Bain-Selbo presents that it is necessary to study the impact of colonialism as it “challenges our ability to understand the religious lives of others.”³⁴ Bain-Selbo is presenting the notion that understanding the effects of colonialism on religion allows for scholars to comprehend the religious lives during the period and after. This suggests that understanding the effect of colonialism allows for scholars to deeper comprehend the religion and its experiences. With this in mind this dissertation will aim to use post-colonial literature and thought in relation to messianic thought in Rastafarian tradition.

The Kingship of the Messiah

³¹ Robinson, *Essential Judaism: A Complete Guide to Beliefs, Practices, and Rituals*, p. 290.

³² Robinson, *Essential Judaism: A Complete Guide to Beliefs, Practices, and Rituals*, p. 294.

³³ J Goldingay, 'Isaiah Then and Now: Reflections of the Responses to The Theology of the Book of Isaiah', *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 25(1) (2016), p. 36.

³⁴ E Bain-Selbo, 'Understanding the Other: The Challenge of Post-Colonial Theory to the Comparative Study of Religion', *Religious Studies and Theology*, 18(1) (1999), p. 60.

It can be argued that the imagery of the Messiah as a King is a significant aspect of what is expected of the Messiah in Orthodox Judaism and Catholicism. Zechariah 9:9 presents the Messiah as a future King from the royal line of David. Cohn-Sherbok presents that this passage is a “vision of hope” that this King will bring peace. Zechariah 9:9 states;

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey.” (Zech. 9:9)

This presents that the Messiah is interpreted amongst scholarship to be a future royal figure who will bring peace and hope. By linking the Messiah and the line of David, Cohn-Sherbok presents the idea that the Messiah will become a king that will become king of Jerusalem and bring peace. This is further supported as Zechariah describes a victorious king riding into Jerusalem. Mark J Boda discusses the reflection of the political environment in which Zechariah was written as he references Walter Rose Harper who claims that throughout the book of Zechariah one prevalent theme is the lack of a king in Jerusalem.³⁵ This presents the idea that the author of Zechariah, who was writing during the Persian Empires reign in Jerusalem, was mirroring the environment that the community was in as they hoped for the end of the control of outside powers and for a king to bring peace to the community. Isaiah is important to understanding this reading of Zechariah as it presents that these themes can be seen in several prophetic texts. This is further supported by William Rainey Harper’s interpretation of the passage of Isaiah. Isaiah 9 states that;

³⁵ Mark J Boda, *‘The Book of Zechariah: The New International Commentary on the Old Testament’*, ed. By R K. Harrison and Robert L. Hubbard, (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company 2016)p. 65.

“For a child has been born for us a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Harper suggests that this passage presents a future child figure, that will bring peace and banish war while seated on the throne of David.³⁶ This mirrors the ideas concerning the Messiah that Cohn-Sherbok presents, that the Messiah figure of the prophetic texts has an established link to the line of David. This link further supports the image of the Messiah as a King. It is important to consider this image of the Messiah’s argued kingship with the context of these passages. Both of these biblical passages were written during times of extreme outside pressure and control and in order to fully understand the meaning of these passages and their effect on tradition and belief, it is necessary to understand how the authors were affected by their context. As understood by, George Robinson, both of these passages are understood to be written during times of control of outside colonising powers. This context and the idea of the Messiah as a king presents that they are sources of hope and peace during times of profound struggle. This is supported by Rose who highlights that a lack of a King of Jerusalem is prevalent throughout the Book of Zechariah.³⁷ This is mirrored as Harper further explains that this passage is a “great light” for the Jewish community.³⁸ Harper is highlighting the notion that the Messiah as a king is a signal of hope and possible sign of peace for a community that is suffering under the control of other powers. Thus, these passages in the Book of Isaiah and Zechariah highlight that the Messiah is expected to be a King from the line of David who will bring peace and independence to Jerusalem.

³⁶ W. R Harper, ‘The Child Prophecies of Isaiah’, *The Biblical World*, 8(6) (1896), pp.420-421

³⁷ Boda, ‘*The Book of Zechariah: The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*’. P. 65.

³⁸ Harper, ‘The Child Prophecies of Isaiah’, p.420.

The Messiah as a Social Redeemer and Liberator

The Messiah has been understood as an expected royal figure who will bring peace to Jerusalem and the Jewish community; however, it is to be seen how this impacts the notions of the Messiah as a social liberator. Daniel Schibler argues that the future King is also expected to “practice justice and righteousness, as David is said to have done.”³⁹ As Schibler presents the Messiah is seen to have an important expected role of a king, from the line of David, that will bring peace during a period of suffering by the control of outside powers. This idea suggests that the messianic King also has an expected social and redeeming role as it highlights the hope the Messiah will establish “justice and righteousness.”⁴⁰ Cohn-Sherbok highlights that the prophetic texts of the Hebrew Bible had constant themes of hope and “future redemption”⁴¹ and this idea can be mirrored in the work of Isaiah 9 and Zechariah 9 and their connotations of what is expected of the Messiah. The language and imagery of kingship suggests that there is a political and social aspect to the Messiah’s duty as they are expected to be the leader of Jerusalem. Zechariah states that the Messiah will arrive “triumphant and victorious” (Zech. 9:9) and suggests connotations of a king who will end the suffering of the community and the social, as well as political, role of the Messiah. Schibler supports this as he highlights that this messianic figure is expected to establish justice. This idea creates connotations that this justice for the Jewish community, as a leader, can be extended to protecting the community against the Empires that have oppressed them. These ideas are mirrored in Isaiah 9, which also claims the future messianic figure will be a “prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6-7). This is presented through the connection of Zechariah and the Jewish

³⁹ D Schibler, ‘Messianism and Messianic Prophecy in Isaiah 1-12 and 28-3’ in *The Lord’s Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, ed. By P. E Satterthwaite and R. S. Hess and G. J. Wenham, (Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers 2012), p. 89.

⁴⁰ D Schibler, ‘Messianism and Messianic Prophecy in Isaiah 1-12 and 28-3’, p.89.

⁴¹ Cohn-Sherbok, ‘The Jewish Messiah’, p.1.

mourning period of Tisha B'av. George Robinson explains that Zechariah 9:9 is often viewed as a passage of hope that a future king will bring social liberation to the Jewish community as he explains that the Jewish community look to the Book of Zechariah during the mourning period of Tisha B'av. Tisha B'av is the Jewish mourning period that grieves the loss of the Second Temple, as it was destroyed by the Roman Empire. This is a profound example of an outside oppressive empire having a long lasting significant impact on the Jewish communities religion and lifestyle. This is mirrored as Tisha B'av is still practiced today. Robinson highlights how passages, such as Zechariah create the image of hope that a future king will end the suffering of the community and rebuild the Temple.⁴² This idea creates the image of a time where there is an end to the oppression the community has faced. Robinson is presenting the notion that the Messiah is expected to be a social liberator as well as a kingly figure as he highlights the idea that the Messiah will bring about a time of peace, when oppression will end, and the Temple can be rebuilt. Thus, Zechariah 9 can be seen to present the notion that the Messiah will create an age of social freedom and liberation for the Jewish community.

The Messiah as a Fulfilment

Finally, it is important to understand how the Messiah is seen as an expected fulfilment of the Hebrew Bible and its prophetic texts, Zechariah, and Isaiah, as well as how this influence the messianic expectations in Catholicism. When considering the Messiah in Catholicism it is necessary to discuss the New Testament as it holds sacred authority and remains the main source for information on Jesus and who he was, it remains a "regulative principle in Christian thinking."⁴³ The Gospel of Matthew states that;

⁴² Robinson, *Essential Judaism: A Complete Guide to Beliefs, Practices, and Rituals*, p.135.

⁴³ 'The Catholicism of the New Testament', *The Biblical World*, 33(3) (1909), p. 151.

“Tell the daughter of Zion, Look your King is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey and on a colt” (Matt. 21:5).

One way of interpreting this passage has been to argue for a direct link between Zechariah 9:9 and connecting the messianic ideas of Zechariah to Jesus. . Stephen Carlson presents the argument that there is a “explicit citation of the prophecy” in this passage.⁴⁴ Carlson highlights that, for a Christian reader, this passage would present a clear link between Matthew’s language and Zechariah 9, suggesting that this also links Jesus to the notions of what is expected from the Messiah that has been interpreted from these writings. Referencing Zechariah 9:9 in such detail allows the reader to establish connections between the Hebrew Bible prophecies and Jesus. This presents several ideas about Jesus and his messiahship, as well as what is expected of the Messiah. Matthew’s use of Zechariah’s prophecy suggests that Jesus is the fulfilment of this prophecy. That Jesus’ role in the passage is to be the fulfilment of Zechariah 9:9, and by extension other messianic prophecies in the Hebrew Bible. Presenting Jesus as fulfilling the Hebrew Bible’s ideas of the Messiah also implies that Jesus is a long awaited and predicted messianic figure. The messianic expectation of Jesus presented in Matthew 21:5 is a figure who will fulfil the Messiah that generations had awaited and predicted. This is supported as David Instone-Brewer, who explains that the imagery of the donkeys in Matthew “should always make one think of the Messiah because of the association with Zechariah 9:9.”⁴⁵ Instone-Brewer is furthering the idea that Christian readers would understand Matthew 21 as ‘proof’ of Jesus fulfilling what was expected of the Messiah, while also reminding readers that Jesus was to be the long awaited kingly figure from the line

⁴⁴ S. Carlson, “The Jenny and the Colt’ in Matthew’s Messianic Entry, Part 1: Matthew 21:5 as a Reading of Zechariah 9:9 in Light of Mark 11:1-10’ *Catholic Biblical Association of America*, 81(1) (2019), p. 65.

⁴⁵ D, Instone-Brewer, ‘The Two Asses of Zechariah 9:9 in Matthew 21’, *Tyndale Bulletin*, 1(6) (2003), p.90.

of David. Thus, Jesus is expected to be the ultimate fulfilment of the messianic figure of the Hebrew Bible, as highlighted by the use of Zechariah 9 in Matthew 21. This by extension suggests that Jesus is the fulfilment of the kingly peaceful redeeming figure that, a Christian reader would argue, the community facing oppression was waiting for.

Conclusion

Overall, there are several important aspects of what is expected from the Messiah that can be seen and supported in the Hebrew Bible prophetic texts. This idea is strongly supported by the writings of Zechariah and Isaiah as they both support the notions that the messiah is expected to be a king, a social and political leader and a fulfilment of these texts and their ideas. This is seen as Isaiah and Zechariah have both been understood to contain strong ideas concerning the coming of a future king of Jerusalem who will socially, politically, and religiously lead the community away from the oppressive powers of outside empires. This is seen as both passages have been understood to contain strong connotations of the link between this future figure and the royal line of David and in doing this suggests that the future king figure has a social role as well as a religious one. The future kingly figure is understood to bring peace and an independent king to Jerusalem and by linking this figure to the notion of peace it presents that this figure also has a role as a social redeemer and liberator for the community that has long suffered. For a Catholic audience, the messiah figure is also expected to fulfil these roles understood from the Hebrew Bible. The use of Zechariah in the Gospel of Matthew highlights the significance of the link between the prophetic ideas of a future king from the line of David and Jesus the understood messiah for Catholics. This is mirrored as James E. Patrick highlights that Matthew makes several connotations and links to Isaiah and its messianic ideas and claims that these links to Isaiah are “fulfilment citations” that

emphasise Jesus' fulfilment of the Hebrew Bible.⁴⁶ Thus, there are three main themes concerning the messiah that can be understood from and supported by Zechariah 9 and Isaiah 9 including the messiah as a king, a social redeemer, and a long awaited fulfilment of the prophecies of the Hebrew Bible's prophets. These key themes of the Messiah can be seen from a Rastafarian perspective. It is important to discuss how these themes have influenced Rastafarian thought and tradition surrounding the Messiah.

⁴⁶ J. E. Patrick, 'Matthew's Peshar Gospel Structured Around Ten Messianic Citations of Isaiah', *The Journal of Theological Studies*, 61 (1) (2010), p. 55.

Chapter Three: Messianic Expectation in Rastafarian Thought

Introduction

After studying the key themes of messianic expectation interpreted from the Hebrew Bible, through the work of the prophetic texts Isaiah 9:6-7 and Zechariah 9:9, that the three key themes of messianic expectation are as follows. The first theme identified is the understanding that the Messiah is expected to be a King from the line of David, this is supported by the work of Cohn-Sherbok and Harper's interpretations of Zechariah 9:9 and Isaiah 9:6-7. The notion of the Messiah's expected kingship is closely linked to the second theme, the Messiah as a social, political liberator and redeemer. Finally, as studied by the use of Zechariah in the Gospel of Matthew, the Messiah is also expected to be the long awaited fulfilment of the Hebrew Bible prophetic texts. These key themes, from the chapter '*Messianic Expectation in the Hebrew Bible*', imply that the Messiah is commonly expected to be; a King from the line of David, a symbol of political and social change, and a fulfilment of the Hebrew Bible's prophets. It is important to reiterate here that the Messiah, in most Rastafari traditions, is understood to be His Majesty Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, who ruled as Emperor of Ethiopia in the late 1920s to the 1930s. As Leonard E. Barrett states Rastafari "members believe that Haile Selassie, former Emperor of Ethiopia, is the Black Messiah."⁴⁷ Firstly, it will be studied how Haile Selassie is understood as a King in Rastafari thought and how this is linked to the ideas of the Messiah in the Hebrew Bible. I will do this by exploring the works of Marcus Garvey in relation to Haile Selassie and how it impacted what was expected of him as the Messiah. Secondly, I will explore how Haile Selassie is viewed as a King

⁴⁷Leonard E. Barrett, '*The Rastafarians*', (Boston: Beacon Press 1988), p.1.

It is also key to note that there are communities and mansions, the different branches of Rastafari, that do not believe Haile Selassie is the messiah. For example, Ennis B. Edmonds discusses a community called the Fulfilled Rastas that do not see Haile Selassie as the Messiah.

and what thus motif means for his messiahship. For instance, how does his kingship link to the kingship of the messianic figure of the Hebrew Bible? How does this impact his expected role as the Messiah? Finally, I will demonstrate how Haile Selassie is understood and perceived by his followers as the fulfilment of the prophetic texts and what is expected of him as the Messiah. Barrett is presenting the link between Haile Selassie and the future kingly figure described in the prophetic texts of the Hebrew Bible, that for his followers Haile Selassie is this figure. This presents several ideas concerning Haile Selassie and his messiahship. The future King figure of the Hebrew Bible, as seen in Chapter Two, must fulfil the notions of who the messiah is, as presented by the prophetic texts of the Hebrew Bible. It is necessary to first understand that Rastafari developed during the British colonial rule of Jamaica and how this impacted Rastafari ideas and thought. David Chidester describes the research of scholars on Religion and Colonialism have studied controlling powers attempts to influence religion as an “instrument of colonizing power”⁴⁸ suggesting that this influence would create a long lasting effect of colonialism on the religions of the country.

The Kingship of the Messiah

The kingship of the Messiah is a considerably important aspect of the messianic expectation interpreted from Zechariah and Isaiah.⁴⁹ The kinship of Haile Selassie is also a significant aspect of his messianic image in Rastafari traditions. Barret states that “the titles of the King as found in the Bible were God’s revelations.”⁵⁰ This presents several ideas concerning Haile Selassie and his messiahship. The future King figure of the Hebrew Bible, as seen in Chapter Two, ‘*Messianic Expectation in the Hebrew Bible*’, has been interpreted to be the Messiah. If

⁴⁸ D Chidester, ‘Colonialism and Religion’, *Critical Research on Religion*, 1(1) (2013), pp. 87-94.

⁴⁹ As seen in Chapter Two several scholars have interpreted and linked ideas of messianic expectation and Kingship. This is seen with links to David and the kingship of Jerusalem.

⁵⁰ Barret, ‘*The Rastafarians*’, p. 83.

Halie Selassie is the King of the Hebrew Bible, what does this mean for what is expected of him as the Messiah.

Leonard Howell is a profoundly significant figure in Rastafari history and thought, he was one of the earliest preachers of Halie Selassie's messiahship, and he preached of Selassie as the messiah, as well as the "King and ruler of the Black people."⁵¹ With this declaration, Howell presented several important aspects of Halie Selassie's messianic role and what was expected of him. Howell's language is linking Halie Selassie to the King described in the Hebrew Bible, he is also linking Selassie to the ideas and interpretations of what is expected of this King in these texts. For example, it was seen in Chapter two's research that "Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6-7) has been interpreted to symbolise a future King who will bring peace and end wars and struggles.⁵² Linking Halie Selassie to this title suggests that he has the same expected duty, to bring peace and liberation to the community. Howell's ideas of Halie Selassie further this idea, as he presents Selassie as a kingly figure that will allow Black people to "soon return to Africa and once there [they] would regain its position and status for so long denied."⁵³ This statement highlights that Halie Selassie, as the Messiah and King, is responsible for bringing peace to the community by bring the Black community of Jamaica to Africa. By creating these connotations and ideas of Halie Selassie's role as the kingly messiah, Howell is suggesting that he is expected to bring peace and political change for the community, by liberating them from the control of the British Government by bringing them to Africa. This is further supported as returning to Africa can be seen to be a key thought in the community of Jamaica at the time. Howell is also quoted as believing that it is the Black community's duty to prepare to return

⁵¹ Clarke, *Black Paradise: The Rastafarian Movement*, p.46.

⁵² W. R Harper, 'The Child Prophecies of Isaiah', pp.420-421.

⁵³ Clarke, *Black Paradise: The Rastafarian Movement*, p. 46.

to Africa.⁵⁴ Marcus Garvey, although not a believer or supporter of Haile Selassie, also preached ideas of returning to Africa, as seen through his efforts to create the “Black Star Line Shipping Company”⁵⁵ a company which aimed to bring Black people to Africa on their cruise liners. Howell presented the idea of Haile Selassie accomplishing this growing idea of going to Africa and by doing so grew the idea that this is what is expected of Haile Selassie as part of his messianic kingship role. Thus, it can be understood that kingship is a significant aspect of what is expected of Haile Selassie as the messiah. Haile Selassie’s kingship presents ideas that he is expected to bring peace to the community by bringing them to Africa, creating an image of hope for the future.

The Social Role of the Messiah

When considering the role of Haile Selassie as the Messiah who will lead to social liberation and change it is important to first consider the work of Marcus Garvey and the context his work was developed in. Marcus Garvey was a popular and profoundly significant Jamaican activist during the 20th century while the British colonial government were still in power before Jamaica gained independence.⁵⁶ Garvey was a key influence in the development of the Rastafari tradition. Garvey’s ideas focused on ideas of Black Pride as a social movement in Jamaica, highlighting that in order for the community to have autonomy and their own culture they needed to have pride established in all areas of their lives. These areas included having pride in their religion, having a God that was not the God of the colonial government but a God the community could identify with. Horace Campbell states that Garvey used religious language when discussing issues of Black pride to create a God the community could have

⁵⁴ Clarke, *Black Paradise: The Rastafarian Movement*, p. 46.

⁵⁵ Campbell, *Rasta, and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney*, p. 61-2.

⁵⁶ James A. Noel, ‘Garvey, Marcus’, *Encyclopaedia of Religion*, Vol.5 (2005)

pride in, a Black God.⁵⁷ For Garvey, worshiping and identifying with a God that mirrored the Black community in Jamaica would grant them autonomy and pride apart from the ideas of their oppressors, the colonial government. Thus, having pride in themselves can be seen as an act of social rebellion against the colonial government in itself. This is important to consider as Garvey was such an influential figure to Jamaican society and Rastafari.

As Barrett explains, when Haile Selassie was crowned as Emperor of Ethiopia, he took on titles that intimately linked him to the bible and biblical ideas; ““to which was added ‘King of Kings’ and the ‘Lion of the tribe of Judah’, placing himself in the legendary line of Solomon”.⁵⁸ These titles link Haile Selassie directly to the Hebrew Bible, as he was linked to the Jewish King Solomon, due to this biblical link Barrett explains some understood Haile Selassie as divine revelation and the messianic figure of the Hebrew Bible in addition to the Black God that Garvey had talked of.⁵⁹ Linking Haile Selassie to the messianic figure of the Hebrew Bible also connects him to the interpretations of what the role of this figure will be. Perception of Haile Selassie as the messianic figure of the Hebrew Bible creates the notion that it is also important to consider how he relates to the perceived understanding of this figure. This presents the idea that Haile Selassie, as the Messiah, is a social and political leader of change as expected of the Messiah interpreted and supported by Zechariah 9 and Isaiah 9. Therefore, Haile Selassie can be understood as the Black God that would allow the Black community in Jamaica could feel pride in, allowing them to have their own God that was not the God of their oppressors. If having pride in themselves and their own religion is, in itself, a socially liberating act then it can be argued that Haile Selassie is a figure of positive social change. By simply

⁵⁷ Campbell, *Rasta, and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney*, p. 60.

⁵⁸ Barrett, *The Rastafarians*, p.81.

⁵⁹ Barrett, *The Rastafarians*, p.81.

worshipping him it can be argued that him it can be argued that some of the community that saw him as the Messiah was achieving this change and liberation. Haile Selassie is thus profoundly linked to the pride that these members of the Black community in Jamaica felt and by extension he is then also intimately linked to the social reform and socially liberating aspect of this act.

The Messiah as a Fulfilment

Finally, it is important to explore how Haile Selassie is expected to fulfil the ideas surrounding the Messiah interpreted from the Hebrew Bible. For example, the understanding of Haile Selassie as the Black God from the line of Solomon, as well as his imagery was the future kingly figure described in the Hebrew Bible's prophetic texts. This section will explore these ideas further and attempt to suggest what is expected of a figure that has been long awaited and predicted. Haile Selassie for the majority of mansions, the different branches of Rastafari, is the Messiah of the Hebrew Bible and his connections to the Hebrew Bible suggest what is expected of Haile Selassie as the messianic figure. Haile Selassie, as a King and as a social leader contribute to ideas of him fulfilling the Hebrew Bible's prophetic texts. The messianic figure in the Hebrew Bible, as seen in Chapter Two, *Messianic Expectation in the Hebrew Bible*, has significant connections to the line of David. Haile Selassie is also seen as having this link. When he was crowned as King of Kings and given titles to link him to the royal line of King Solomon, as Barrett has stated,⁶⁰ Haile Selassie was also closely linked to the line of David. Haile Selassie's genealogy is often linked to King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba on his maternal grandmothers side.⁶¹ The Queen of Sheba is said to have visited King Solomon in 1

⁶⁰ Barrett, *'The Rastafarians'*, p.35.

⁶¹ Edmonds, *Rastafari: A Very Short Introduction*, p. 35.

Kings 10 “King Solomon gave to the Queen of Sheba every desire that she expressed” (1 Kings. 10: 13). This belief within the Rastafari tradition gives Haile Selassie a tangible genealogical link to King David. This can be argued to be an example of how, for Rastafari traditions, Haile Selassie is the fulfilment of what is described of the Messiah in Zechariah 9 and Isaiah 9. These two passages are often interpreted to suggest that the messianic figure will link to the line of David and by linking Haile Selassie to King Solomon, he can be argued to fulfil the aspect of the messianic expectation of the Hebrew Bible. By fulfilling aspects of the Hebrew Bible’s interpreted messianic ideas, Haile Selassie is also fulfilling the notion that as the Messiah he will fulfil these texts. This idea and the ideas already studied of Haile Selassie fulfilling messianic ideas highlights the importance of fulfilment to Haile Selassie’s messiahship within the Rastafarian traditions.

Conclusion;

Overall, there are three key themes that have been studied in regard the Haile Selassie’s messiahship in Rastafari tradition. Firstly, he is seen as fulfilling the expected messianic idea and ideal that he will be a social and political figure of change as he is a way for the community to socially rebel against the religion the colonial government was telling them to worship. Secondly, Haile Selassie is also seen as fulfilling the messianic idea of kingship, as he is believed to be the kingly messianic figure of the Hebrew Bible and this notion is connected to ideas of allowing the community to go to Africa, an extremely significant social idea amongst the community that continues to have importance. Barry Chevannes explains that after the crowning of Haile Selassie there was a new period of Idealization of Africa in Jamaican society.⁶²

⁶² B Chevannes, *‘Rastafari: Roots and Ideology’* p. 33-4.

Thirdly, these and Haile Selassie's believed connection to King Solomon, and by extension King David, presents that fulfilment is a significant aspect of Haile Selassie's messiahship and that he is expected to continue to fulfil what was written in the Hebrew Bible. Thus, these themes highlight what is expected of Haile Selassie as the Messiah for Rastafari traditions and how these are linked closely to the messianic ideas of the Hebrew Bible's prophetic texts. Finally, I will demonstrate the concepts that this research has evaluated and what this suggests about messianic expectation in Rastafarian thought.

Final Conclusion

The aim of this dissertation was to explore the connection between the messianic figure regarded in the Hebrew Bible's prophetic texts and Haile Selassie's messiahship in Rastafarian tradition. This has been studied by exploring the key themes of what was expected of this messianic figure seen in the Hebrew Bible and understandings of Haile Selassie in Rastafarian thought. From this analysis it can be seen that Haile Selassie's messiahship is intimately linked with the understanding of the Messiah from the Hebrew Bible. Haile Selassie is understood to be the fulfilment of the Messiah that the Hebrew Bible is viewed as describing. The Messiah of the Hebrew Bible's prophetic texts, as seen through scholarly interpretation of Zechariah 9 and Isaiah 9, is seen to be a future royal figure from the line of David. Haile Selassie is viewed, in Rastafarian tradition, as being from the line of King Solomon. This is seen in chapter three, *Messianic Expectation in Rastafarian Thought*, as Haile Selassie is understood as having maternal links to King Solomon through the Queen of Sheba, after his meeting her in Kings 1. This presents that Haile Selassie is from the royal line of David, something that was and is expected of the messianic figure.

Haile Selassie is also understood as a figure of social liberation and peace. As chapter two, *Messianic Expectation in the Hebrew Bible*, describes this messianic figure interpreted from Zechariah 9 and Isaiah 9 is a figure that should bring peace, justice and social liberation from the colonial powers that threatened the early Jewish community. Through Garvey's ideas of social liberation, that the Black community of Jamaica should have their own God that reflects them instead of their oppressors, Haile Selassie can be understood to highlight this social liberation. By being the God that reflected the community Haile Selassie is understood, in Rastafarian thought, to be this social redeemer and peace maker described in the Hebrew

Bible. He allows the community to create their own identity and rebel against the colonial government.

Finally, these ideas of Haile Selassie as a kingly figure, from the line of David, who will also bring justice and social liberation, also present him as a fulfilment of the Hebrew Bible and who the Messiah is expected to be. These ideas highlight that, for his followers, Haile Selassie is the messianic figure of the Hebrew Bible and a fulfilment of what was expected of this figure, thus, he is expected to fulfil what is expected of this figure.

Through approaching these ideas with the effect of post-colonialism in mind creates a deeper understanding of how the Messiah relates to the social and political climate of Rastafari. This has allowed a comprehensive understanding of the profound social significance of the Messiah and what the Messiah means for the mansions of Rastafari that support Haile Selassie's messiahship. The effect of colonialism has proved a significant aspect of understanding the role of the Messiah as a social liberator. This is seen by understanding the importance of Black Pride to figures such as Leonard Howell and Marcus Garvey, both of which hold a great status and influence of Rastafarian thought. Through the ideas of these figures it can be understood that Haile Selassie as a Black God held great importance in the context of Jamaica with a colonial British government. As seen in chapter three, , *Messianic Expectation in Rastafarian Thought*, the notion of Haile Selassie as a God that the Black community could identify with and relate too held great significance in creating an identity and religion apart from the religion of the colonial government. Colonialism was also seen in chapter one, *The Hebrew Bible in Rastafarian Tradition*, to greatly impact the keeping and growing of dreadlocks as they are still seen as a form of social rebellion against the notions of what was acceptable to the colonial government. Thus, post-colonialism has been a valuable

tool in understanding Rastafarian thought surrounding the messiah, as well as identifying the interpreted messianic figure of the Hebrew Bible's prophetic texts and what this figure represented for the early Jewish community. Post-Colonialism is also seen to be useful in reading and understanding the tradition of keeping and growing dreadlocks. This presents the notion that colonialism has affected both religious thought and tradition.

Through these ideas it can be understood that Haile Selassie's messiahship and what is expected of him is intimately linked to ideas interpreted from the Hebrew Bible. How he is understood as the messiah is significantly impacted by how the Hebrew Bible's prophetic texts and the future figure of hope described in these texts. Thus, the relationship between Haile Selassie's messiahship and what is expected of him is closely linked to the messianic ideas interpreted from the Hebrew Bible. Haile Selassie is understood to be the fulfilment of the messianic figure that is interpreted from the Hebrew Bible's prophetic texts. Haile Selassie, in some communities, is understood as the kingly redeeming figure that scholars have interpreted from texts such as Zechariah 9 and Isaiah 9. This intimately links Haile Selassie's messiahship and the influence of the Hebrew Bible. The belief that Haile Selassie is the Messiah, who was prophesied in the Hebrew Bible, highlights how the Hebrew Bible is a profoundly significant aspect of his messiahship and how his followers understand him. Messianic expectation in Rastafarianism, thus, can be seen to be continually influenced by the Hebrew Bible as it impacts how Haile Selassie is understood as the Messiah. These ideas closely influence how he is viewed as the Messiah and what this means for his role and status in Rastafarian tradition. These ideas also highlight the significance of the Hebrew Bible in Rastafarian tradition overall. This was explored in chapter one, *The Hebrew Bible in Rastafarian Tradition*, where it was understood that the Hebrew Bible is not the only important influence in Rastafarian tradition. However, it still maintains a deep significance

and status in Rastafarian thought. The Hebrew Bible impacts notions of food laws, menstruation and the keeping of dreadlocks. These aspects of religious tradition greatly impact an individual's personal view of their religion as well as their lifestyle. Food laws impact everyday life and attitudes to menstruation are a deeply personal aspect of womanhood. Dreadlocks are also a significant part of how a person presents themselves and their relationships to their religion. This also suggests an important status of the Hebrew Bible in Rastafarian thought as it highlights how this text influences messianic ideas within the community. Ideas of hope, redemption, and social liberation. The Black God that Marcus Garvey described and preached.

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