

Religion of the rastafarians

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Religion of the Rastafarians The Rastafarian Movement began in Jamaica in the 1920's by a man named Marcus Garvey. His philosophical ideologies led to the establishment of the Rastafarian religion in 1930. Rastafarians began to identify themselves as a religious group. Rasta is should be considered a religion because it carries all the major components of religion, which include myth, doctrine, morality, personal experience, ritual, and community. The Rastafarian Movement was a powerful social force beginning in the 1920's. Marcus Garvey was the spokesman for the Back-to-Africa movement. He declared that " the redemption of the people would come from a future black African king" (" Rastafarian Forum"). His prediction was surprisingly correct. A few years later, on November 20th, 1930, Ras Tafari Makonnen became Ethiopia's king and claimed himself as " Emperor of the Power of the Trinity". Thus, the Rasta Movement began. Beginning in the slums of Jamaica, the Rastafarian religion now has over " 700, 000 members worldwide" with official branches in the U. S., England, Canada, and the Caribbean Islands (" Rastafarian Forum"). Even " fifty years after independence, Rasta remains the most dynamic social and even political movement" (Jamaica Observer). Myth is considered one of the most important components of religion. Myth helps to relate fictional stories or fables with realistic ideals and values. The Rastafarians believe that they are the reincarnation of the ancient tribes of Israel who had been enslaved and kept in exile by their white oppressors. They also believe that God revealed himself in Moses, who in the Bible is the first savior. Elijah is the second and Jesus Christ is the third. The advent of Rastafari is the climax of God's revelation and they teach that Jesus predicted the coming of Haile Selassie or the Ras Tafari. These are biblical myths and stories that relate to their own beliefs. Although the Rasta's have

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no official church building or leader, (they believe that each individual group and person is autonomous), they do have doctrines that they teach and follow. The Bible can be a central text in the Rastafarian belief. They believe that the Scripture should be searched for hidden meanings and directives (“Rastafarian Forum”). They also accept any passages that harmonize with their beliefs. Although the Bible is an important doctrine, the six principles are the main guide for Rasta’s. These six principles are: “(1) hatred for the white race, (2) the complete superiority of the black race, (3) Revenge on whites for their wickedness, (4) the negation, persecution, and humiliation of the government and legal bodies of Jamaica, (5) preparation to go back to Africa, (6) Acknowledgement of Haile Selassie as the Supreme Being and only ruler of the Black people” (“Rastafarian Forum”). They also have two concepts that are essential to their faith. The first concept is the teaching of Babylon and the establishment of the white oppressors. The second is the concept of “I and I”. I and I, being the oneness of two persons, reflects the belief that God is within us all. It also explains their thought on reincarnation and that the bond of Ras Tafari is the bond of God, of man (“Rastafarian Forum”). One last doctrine is the Doctrine of Avatar, which reveals the stories of the three saviors, or avatars, Moses, Elijah, and Jesus. Another component of religion is morality, or personal beliefs that keep a uniform society. The most highlighted morals in the Rastafarian religion are the ethos of peace and love. However, the hatred among the whites and seeking for revenge for their black brethren is a moral that was dominant in the establishment of Rasta. Rasta’s are mainly identified by their dreadlocks and their endorsement of smoking marijuana. Little do people know that these are another component of their religion! These are “rituals” or practices

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among the Rasta community. The dreadlocks are actually a “ biblical injunction against the cutting of ones hair” (“ Rastafarian Forum”). Ganja or marijuana is a “ holy sacrament, a holy herb mentioned in the Bible” (“ Rastafarian Forum”). The Rastafarians smoke the ganja because the herb is the “ key to understanding of the self, the universe, and God” (“ Rastafarian Forum”). As mentioned above, the Rastafarian community is easily identified by their dreadlocks and smoking marijuana. However, there are other things that make the Rastafarian people a community. A community is a group of people who share the same mindset, or ideologies. For instance, their ideas on love, peace, and unity make them a community. They also restrain from consuming alcoholic beverages and pork products. The Rastafarian community also observes April 21st as a “ religious” holiday. On April 21st of 1966, Selassie or Ras Tafari visits Jamaica and that day is observed as a Rastafarian holy day. Although the Rastafarian religion does not get the proper recognition, it is a religion worth of recognizing. It has all the major components of the mainstream Abrahamic religions. Some of the Rastafarian ideologies may seem a bit extreme or radical; it is a part of what makes them a unified community and religion. Their rituals may seem bizarre and they only have one holiday, however, there is no written limit or restriction on the types of rituals or days of religious observance. Rasta is a unique and one of a kind religion. Works Cited Branch, Rick. “ Rastafarian Forum”. Rastaman. co. uk. Web. 10 Dec. 2012. Wignall, Mark. “ Give Rasta official religious Rights for Jamaica 50”. Jamaicaobserver. com. Jamaica Observer. 22 April 2012. Web. 10 Dec. 2012.