

CONGREGATION OF SELASSIE I
<http://www.angelfire.com/empire/rastafari0>

INTERVIEW WITH MESSIAN DREAD

I first encountered the man called Messiah Dread while surfing the net in search of information on Rastafari livity. There were a few things that I encountered in "The Dubroom" that ran contrawise to my perception, or misperception, of the Rastafarian way:

He was white and from the Netherlands.

He seemed to promote an amalgamation of Rastafari and Christianity.

However, as I studied the content of his reasonings more thoroughly, I have come to think of him quite differently. It is evident that he has more than a superficial familiarity with RasTa ideology and, if it is possible for a European to develop a black consciousness, perhaps he is well on his way. As a man of color who is well aware of the idiosyncratic nature of race and racial identity, it rare that I give respect to an "outsider" concerning matters so closely associated with "my people," but he deserves it. The longevity and consistency of his trod is proof that he is sincere in his convictions. His candid responses to my questions also revealed a well thought out philosophy. Respect.

On the matter of his "Christ consciousness," rarely have I encountered a Messiah Dread/Jesus Dread who was little more than a fundamentalist Christian that "really liked reggae music." They were definitely 98% Jesus and 2% Dread. All about evangelizing and "how to witness to Rastas" with no sense of dignity and respect. But, I give him respect again. I perceive a greater sense of spirituality and mysticism as it were as opposed to religious dogma.

Ultimately, he is a grown man living a grown lifestyle and he is well able to speak for himself. Without further ado, I give you the first "Congregation interview."

Although labels are simply that, "labels," that is how people tend to categorize themselves and others in order to understand a spiritual philosophy, concept, etc. How would you define/classify yourself to someone who is curious about your spiritual convictions and philosophy?

Well, I am a Messiah Dread. Just like there is Messiah Jews. These are Jews who follow the Messiah. I am a Dread, following Messiah.

A Jesus Dread, like Yabby You? Are there many Messiah Dreads in your area? I notice you play in a reggae band, would these members consider themselves Messiah also?

Yes, I am a member of Jah Roots, and all of we are Messiahs though we are not all dreadlocks from the outside.

What is Babylon?

Babylon you can find in the bible. It is the name given to the first "civilization" as it is called. In Old Testament times there was a dream by a babylonian king called Nebuchadnezzar who dreamt of a statue, of himself. His head was of gold, his breast of iron et cetera. The dream was world history in short before it happened. Babylon is the head, that is the inspiration, for all the empires coming after babylon. In normal English, the bible teaches us that babylon is the name for all the systems that dominate the world throughout history. The babylonians, the romans, the Persians. And now it is the western world. babylon is the organized religion and rebellion against Jah.

What was the process that led you to Ras Tafari/Selassie I? Do you feel that it was mystical/GOD ordained, preplanned for you?

I think so, in a way. I know for a fact that Jah Jah wanted me to be Dread from the day I was born. Or even before that. I grew up in a Pentecostal environment, what they call fundamental Christian I believe. I turned away from that at a very young age and because of it, I was heading towards the wrong direction: I was getting into occultic practices and other things. Jah did prevent me from going too far in this by getting me in touch with Reggae Music and Rasta Philosophy. For me this has functioned as a bridge to Christ. I needed to see my personal need for the Savior and Jah has been merciful towards me by doing this. To sight Rasta and Selassie I in this process, as said, proved to be part of Jah's plan in my life.

The book, "Chanting Down Babylon," makes reference to the migration of Jamaicans and rastas to the Netherlands, European countries. Is there a strong rasta contingency in your area? Do you have any affiliation with them?

I do not think there is a strong Rastafarian group in the Netherlands. Reggae is very popular and everyone grows dreads at the moment, but Rastas in this country, in my impression living in a part of the country far away from the big cities, are kind of individual people running and living their lives.

Talk to me about Ras Tafari and Race. The Ras Tafari origins are based in black consciousness. How do you relate the origins of rasta to your life as a "Netherlander" (that is probably a bad joke, but it seemed funny to me.). You have a reasoning about Black consciousness issues on your site. Have you received any input about this, positive or negative? You have a dub song with a Marcus Garvey sample in it. Also your site contains a lot of Ethio. Orth. Church imagery. Define explain your understanding/affinity for black culture.

A very important thing in Rasta is that Babylon is identified as an evil system trying to prevent Jah from doing His works. This is a thing which has to do with all people of all races. If only because of this, I think this alone is enough of a reason to sight

Rastafari, or at least be interested in this. Another thing which is very strong in me, is to fight against racism. From as long as I can remember, I have always been very much connected with these issues. One other thing which is quite important to me in this matter, is the way that Rasta teaches black people about black culture. Where babylon has, in the name of the Saviour, told black people to be less than white (to say it polite) Rasta has told black people how JAH, the MOST HIGH, thinks about black people. Black is beautiful! In Christianity you also hear a lot of talking about the so called Christian identity of the western culture. This is something to which I wholeheartedly disagree, especially since the west has a bloody past, rooted and founded in big sins. When you then go to Ethiopia, black Christianity, you see their wrong. You see that "Jesus" is not the one on the head of babylon, but you see that Yesus is on the side of the sufferers. Ethiopia is mentioned in the bible many times, but in such a way that you need an eye to see and then you see that Jah has used Black people and culture to preserve many of his things. The only king in the earth that could say to have descended from Solomon. He is an African, not a European. The Ethiopian Orthodox church stands (more than) symbol for that, in my opinion.

Excellent point, but consider this. So often (at least here in the States) black culture is abused by white youths. "Hip-Hop" was turned into "rap" by white culture and black culture is mimicked to the point of buffoonery by white teens here in the USA. They try to live what they don't understand and ,in the process, have cheapened a legitimate piece of blackness. Has the significance of Ras Tafari been cheapened by naive white youths and sapped of its strength? It seems as if Bob Marley is the patron saint, if not JAH, to so many and Ras Tafari is completely neglected or misunderstood. People are side stepping HIM in order to live a microwavable rasta lifestyle. All image and no substance or livity. Have you encountered this in your interactions with people and how do you counteract this in your contact with others?

I think that this is all reasoned without a crucial aspect in this matter. We are talking here about Jah and about the way that He acts with people. We are not talking here about people who are just into a certain culture because of the vibes. "Black is beautiful" does not mean "white is ugly". When Rastafari puts effort in uplifting Black People as a people, this does not mean to exclude white people. It is to get the balance straight. We must always remember that we are one people: out of one blood cometh all nation so the Scriptures teach us. The message of Rastafari is totally different then the Hip Hop message. Besides that, I think that the USA have quite a segregated culture in some ways and this is the culture that brings people to certain things, too.

Having said that, yes it is true that there are also many people who are into Bob Marley because of their own view on the King of Reggae and therefore they start to become "Rasta" like a Metaller like Metal so the Rasta like Reggae they think. I agree with you that many are not really digging out Rastafari and they stick with the music.

In the 1980's, when I was a teenager, I heard a reggae singer say that he just say Rastafari because he liked the sound of the word and for the rest it did not matter to him at all. Yes, image, Rasta Image, is an image that some dress themselves with. How do I deal with these things? That is perhaps the most difficult question that you ask me.

People are all responsible for themselves and I can only live my life.

You will not find on my site stuff like "how to grow my dreads". Yes, well you will find remarks to it but you will not find usefull tips, only spiritual reasonings. This way I hope to give a signal.

I read somewhere that you have a daughtther. Do you raise your child/children to revere Selassie I?

I try to raise my child with a consciousness towards Jah. I think it is important that she knows who Selassie is but I will not push these ideas on her. I think that these things has to grow in one, it has to be put there by Jah and when consciousness grows also the need for explanations concerning the person of Selassie will.

So you are saying that not everyone is called to Ras Tafari, Ras Tafari is not for everyone? Do you believe that GOD calls people, who are Christians, to Ras Tafari or he calls rastas to Christ depending on HIS purposes for them? So, in one sense their is no difference between Rasta and Christianity?

Rastafari is for those who have eyes to see Rastafari. Each and every Rasta will tell you that Rasta is part of an identity "from creation", that means that one can not push it or put it in someone. Only Jah can do that. And Jah uses Rastafari to show the people that He is on the side of the sufferers and not of the exploiters.

I do know that this is not a thing which all Rastas agree over but I believe that Rastafari should lead to Christianity. In that matter, yes, like you ask before, "follow HIM like HIM followed Christ".

Is Ras Tafari divine?

The best is to see what he said himself. He is not God. He is not an incarnated part of the Divine Trinity. He is a man, mortal like you and I. A Christian who has expressed his need for salvation more than once. He is, however, a son of Solomon and David, and as such he and his position have a spiritual function to point to the coming Theocracy when Jah come to downstroy babylon by the blow of His Mouth.

His ancestor ,David, was a prophet. Was/Is Selassie I a prophet in your opinion? Does his messianic lineage give him an anointing or divine empowerment to enact a divine plan? Is this

mission passed on to his offspring? Is Zere Yacob divinely anointed to carry out GOD's divine plan?

I believe that Selassie, because of his function, had a prophetic or spiritually symbolic position to resemble and to echo in front the coming reign of Jah the Almighty. This is surely a Divinely Institution.

What are some of the spiritual texts/authors that you draw inspiration from?

Apart from the (obvious) Bible, a book called Dread Jesus had a mighty impact on me because it documented a movement of which I know to be a part of. Another book called "The Normal Christian Life" by a Chinese writer called Watchman Nee has had a tremendous influence on my spiritual life and path. The Book of Enoch to me is also a vital and crucial source of information.

I understand Enoch is only preserved in its entirety in Ethiopia. Do you think that the book of Enoch is GOD-breathed or canonical as the Christians say? Is it given by divine inspiration and infallible as the word of GOD?

Also in Armenia, but that aside. The book of Enoch is quoted in the New Testament and presented as prophecy. It explains until a great extend how the so called civilizations came to exist and the true reason for the great flood. The reason was that fallen angels made offspring with human women. That the days of Noah, because these were the days of Noah, will be repeated in the last times, that is the current times in my strong opinion, is a very scary thing and Jah has used Ethiopia to preserve the knowledge concerning the old times.

What do you feel your relationship to Haile Selassie I is? Do you "follow" HIM?

Define "Follow". I think there are a lot of teachings and lessons to be learned concerning Selassie. Selassie is not my God but he is surely a source of inspiration, and a symbol of Jah's choices.

Follow-to order one's life after the pattern of another. Do you use Selassie I's life as a pattern for your own life? Is he your example, like when Paul said, "follow me as I follow Christ?"

In a way, yes. I follow Selassie to Kristos. Selassie has put so much effort in spreading the true Christian Gospel to the Rastafarian Community that I think it is obvious that one should come to Kristos when one follows Selassie. You follow the sign, yes? The signs on the road. And when you follow the sign you come to the goal.

What is the most significant lesson that you have learned from Haile Selassie I?

Never to think that babylon is a Christian thing.

Yes, Ethiopia was present at the day of Pentecost and has carried a Christian tradition since then. Of course you realize that a war is waged over Selassie's Faith, was he a believer in GOD or JAH Almighty. Christ cannot be a Christian also, if you know what I mean. Some say Rastas are the true Christians, followers of Christ Selassie I. Would you elaborate on your above answer? How did you learn from Selassie I that Christianity is not babylonian and please define what you think a "christian" is?

To learn from Selassie that Christianity is not babylonian, could more or less be reasoned from the same foundation as why people started to believe that he was Kristos in the first place. People believed it because they could not believe that this blue eye jesus who told slaves to be quite until heaven and that white is better than black. They identified this as a false jesus. And so they looked to Selassie and said this is Christ. They

were not stupid. I have had reasoning with a scholar of the Ethiopian Orthodox church concerning this and he said it happened before, in the Bible, where Paulus was mistakenly identified as God. He was so anointed by the Holy Spirit. Same thing with Selassie. And that is why Selassie said: "Who am I to deny their faith," when he was asked was about the Rastafarians. He knew that in essence these people were Christians but because babylon had painted in front of them a false jesus, for centuries long, they didn't know where to look for the Savior. And that is why Haile Selassie sent Abuna Yesehaq, to show the people about Christ and true Christianity.

A Christian is an individual who has seen the need to be saved by the Divine Savior Yesus Kristus (Jah incarnated in the flesh) and who has also called upon the Name of Yesus to be saved after realizing that there is no other Name under which one can be saved.

What type of response have you received from the Ras Tafari community about your works, ideology, reasonings, etc.?

Most responses are simply positive. Overstanding. Many see where I'm coming from with what I'm trying to say. Some express to me that I say what they feel, too. Others feel blessed cause they see in writing a thing that they felt but couldn't give words to it.

Others disagree and express this disagreement too, but always thoughtful and with respect.

It happens that people, in the name of Selassie, try to fight me down so to speak, but usually these are very young people with youthly energy and it becomes clear they have not read my meditations but put their own prejudice towards Christians on my head.

Yes, to be young again. But who has the energy to go back and do it all over? The internet is an odd place to reason. You never know who you are talking to.

True enough. I made and make many mistakes in this but my experience grows! Added to that I do not care ofcourse about age and the other thing, ignorance when it comes to my meditations, is easily seen.

What type of response have you received from the Christian community? I've noticed from very intense reasoning between you and fundamentalists. They seem to drive the ganja issue into the ground incessantly. Do you ever get tired of that debate?

Tired, no not really. Sometimes for a short while and then I don't reason about it, but there is a need for this debate and I think that I should participate in it. I think that it is important that Christians within Reggae and Rastafari are provided with thoughtful reasoning.

Do you ever feel torn between Christ and Haile Selassie as far as spiritual influence is concerned?

No, never. I think my meditations also connects Christ and Selassie in a way which Selassie himself also presented it. There are no contradictions in this.

This is totally off of the subject, but indulge me. I respect your dub creations. I have 5 of your cd's. What is the best dub album ever created? And doesn't Prince Far I have some of the best stripped down dub to chant over in the world (That is a blatant plug for my favorite reggae artist. VOICE OF THUNDER is the most raw chanted album out there that I've heard. I love the messages given by "inspiration of HIGH PRINCE FAR I")

Prince Fari definitely belongs to the crème de la crème so to speak. But the best dub album I know of must be the Dub

Factor by Black Uhuru. But there are more great Dubs ofcourse and my favorite albums vary from time to time. And thank you for having my albums!

Is there any particular message that you would like to leave with us?

Do not think that Rastafari and Christianity exclude each other!

Do you think that there will every be a Selassian Church as predicted by the author of Dread Jesus, I believe? Like Lutheran, Methodist, etc., will there be a Selassian denomination? Would that still be Ras Tafari and would you attend services if there was such a congregation in your area?

Well, the foundation have always been there and is coming to the surface more strong in the last decade. What one will build on that foundation, a Selassiean Church or not, I do not know. Because of Rasta's individuality I think that the need for such a church is not necessarily related with the amount of "Yesus Dreads" or "Christian Rastas" or whatever the name is what you want to give it.

If there was such a congregation, I would attend it or at least visit once in a while but I would also stress the fact that no Christian group should limit itself to a certain particular group of people.

Thank you for taking the time to reason with me.

One Love!