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# 'SEA KAFFIRS': 'AMERICAN NEGROES' AND THE GOSPEL OF GARVEYISM IN EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY CAPE TOWN*

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ABSTRACT: This article demonstrates that black British West Indians and black South Africans in post-First World War Cape Town viewed 'American Negroes' as divinely ordained liberators from South African white supremacy. These South-African based Garveyites articulated a prophetic Garveyist Christianity that provided common ideological ground for Africans and diasporic blacks through leading black South African organizations like the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (UNIA), the African National Congress (ANC) and the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU). This study utilizes a 'homeland and diaspora' model that simultaneously offers an expansive framework for African history, redresses the relative neglect of Africa and Africans in African diaspora studies and demonstrates the impact of Garveyism on the country's interwar black freedom struggle.

KEY WORDS: South Africa, diaspora, race, politics, religion.

THE Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (UNIA) in the 1920s was the largest and most widespread black-led movement in the world. At its height, the UNIA had an estimated two million members and sympathizers and approximately 1,000 chapters in 43 countries and territories. Founded and led by the Jamaican-born Marcus Garvey, the meteoric rise of the New York-based UNIA resulted in the enthusiastic reception of blacks worldwide to its primary aims and goals of freeing Africa from European colonial domination, facilitating some back-to-Africa migration amongst diasporic blacks, improving the political, socio-economic, educational, religious and cultural lives of black peoples and resurrecting a sense of racial pride and racial unity. Garvey and the UNIA attempted to fulfill these objectives with an ambitious agenda that included black-controlled shipping lines, corporations, universities and newspapers, as well as a Liberian colonization scheme. Outside of North America and the Caribbean, these aims and ideals – referred to as Garveyism – had their greatest impact in South Africa, as reflected in eight official and numerous unofficial UNIA divisions.[1] Cape Town had the earliest and largest number

* I wish to thank Peter Alegi, Edda Fields-Black, Leslie Brown, Benedict Carton, Robert Edgar, Rebecca Ginsburg, Jerome Handler, Linda Heywood, Joseph E. Harris, John Lonsdale, Tim Parsons, Marcus Rediker, Lester Spence, Emory Tolbert and the anonymous reviewers of the *Journal of African History* for comments on earlier versions of this article.

[1] For an introduction to Garveyism, see R. Hill (ed.), *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers* (Berkeley, 1983); T. Martin, *Race*

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of UNIA divisions (five) of any locality in the 1920s and served as an important entrepot for distributing UNIA materials to other parts of the country. Also, a small, but disproportionately influential 'American Negro'[2] community in Cape Town became the leading transmitters of Garveyism from the Americas into southern Africa.[3]

This article focuses on Cape Town and makes three primary arguments. First, the rise of Garveyism meant that many blacks in South Africa viewed American Negroes not just as models of a transnational black modernity that disproved white claims of inherent black inferiority but as divinely ordained liberators from South African white supremacy. Second, Garveyites in South Africa, as elsewhere in the world, couched their political grievances and aspirations within a prophetic Christianity that featured a fascinating array of Judeo-Christian biblical texts, rituals, symbolism and metaphors to legitimate their claims for an independent Africa and equal rights in the modern world. Third, in addition to its obvious centrality to UNIA chapters, Garveyism pervaded black South African politics generally, as it was an important unifying ideological influence for the UNIA, the African National Congress (ANC) and the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU), the leading black South African organizations of the 1920s.

This study advances previous scholarship in several ways. It provides a tangible example of a 'homeland and diaspora' model that can offer an expansive framework for African history and also redresses the relative

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*First: The Organizational and Ideological Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Dover MA,1976); J. Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey: Race and Class in Modern Society* (Baton Rouge, 1986); and U. Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey: The Life and Times of Amy Jacques Garvey* (Chapel Hill, 2002). I consider Garveyites to comply with at least one of the following: officially chartered members of the UNIA; non-UNIA members who aligned themselves with Garvey and/or the UNIA in actions and words; persons who constituted UNIA chapters and organized under its auspices, even if they did not have an official charter from the UNIA parent body.

[2] I capitalize the term 'American Negro' because, in the context of the early twentieth-century black world, particularly in the United States, black scholars, newspaper editors and political figures insisted that the phrase, as a proper noun, be capitalized to convey a measure of racial regard and equality. Conversely, hostile whites consistently used the term 'negro' in its lower case to convey their view of black inferiority. Many black South African Garveyites had some awareness of this controversy and consciously rendered the term in upper case for these politicized reasons.

[3] See R. T. Vinson, 'In the time of the Americans: Garveyism in segregationist South Africa, 1920–1940' (Ph.D. thesis, Howard University, 2001). Earlier work on Garveyism in southern Africa includes R. Edgar, 'Garveyism in Africa: Dr. Wellington and the American movement in the Transkei', *Ufahamu*, 6 (1976), 31–57; G. Pirio and R. Hill, 'Africa for the Africans: the Garvey movement in South Africa, 1920–1940', in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds.), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth-Century South Africa* (New York, 1987), 209–53; Helen Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom: The ICU in Rural South Africa, 1924–1930* (Johannesburg, 1987); and M. O. West, 'Seeds are sown: the Garvey movement in Zimbabwe in the interwar years', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 35 (2003), 335–62. I use the term 'black' to describe both Africans and the mixed-race people known as Coloureds in situations where members of both groups were participants in the events described.

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neglect of Africa and Africans in African diaspora studies.[4] The study of Garveyism in Cape Town, while intersecting with the historiographies of Africa and the African diaspora, also fuses the relatively underdeveloped historiography of religion in South Africa with that country's more prodigious literature about politics. Prophetic black Christianity and the UNIA became common ideological and organizational ground that linked blacks on both sides of the Atlantic and it facilitated the eastward movements of diasporic peoples and liberationist ideologies to South Africa that made the country arguably the most important site of black transatlantic organizing in the understudied South Atlantic.[5] The emphasis on black British West Indians also pushes South African history beyond its occasionally parochial boundaries, while also seeking to re-orient the overwhelming preoccupation of South African transnational and comparative studies with the United States.[6] In unearthing deep local manifestations of transnational Garveyism, this study moves beyond the broad general surveys that have characterized

[4] Patrick Manning, incorporating the concerns of Joseph E. Harris and George Shepperson, uses the expression 'homeland and diaspora model' to distinguish between scholars who give Africa and Africans prominent place in diasporic studies and those who use what he calls a 'diaspora apart' model that privileges diasporic communities, and not Africa and Africans, as the focus of scholarly inquiry. P. Manning, 'Africa and the African diaspora: new directions of study', *Journal of African History*, 44 (2003), 487–506. The lack of serious engagement of Africa within African diasporic studies is noted in the 'African Diaspora' special issue of *African Studies Review*, 43 (2000) and was evident in the recent 'transnational black studies' issue of the *Radical History Review*, 87 (2003). For theoretical formulations of an African Diaspora, see B. H. Edwards, 'The uses of diaspora', *Social Text*, 19 (2001), 45–73; and K. Butler, 'Defining diaspora, refining a discourse', *Diaspora*, 11 (2002), 189–219.

[5] Recent work that features politicized religious movements during the interwar years includes J. Campbell, *Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa* (New York, 1995); R. Edgar and H. Sapire, *African Apocalypse: The Story of Nonteta Nkwenkwe, a Twentieth Century Prophet* (Athens OH, 2000); R. D. G. Kelley, 'The religious odyssey of African radicals', *Radical History Review*, 51(1991), 5–26; and W. G. Mills, 'Millennial Christianity, British imperialism, and African nationalism', in R. Elphick and T. R. Davenport (eds.), *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (Berkeley,1997), 337–47. African diasporic studies remain overwhelmingly oriented toward the North Atlantic triangle of North America, the Caribbean and Europe. For North Atlantic sites of transnational black organizing like London, Paris and Harlem, see B. H. Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora* (Cambridge, 2003); H. Adi, *West African Students in Britain* (London, 1998); and W. James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth Century America* (New York, 1998).

[6] Recent work in US–South African studies includes Campbell, *Songs of Zion*; B. Carton, 'We are made quiet by this annihilation: historicizing concepts of pollution and sexuality in South Africa', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* (forthcoming, 2006) and the recent special edition of the *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30 (2004). The online journal *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Comparative Studies* provides a publishing outlet for scholars interested in this burgeoning field. For pioneering research on West Indian relations with South Africa, see A. G. Cobley, '"Far from home": the origins and significance of the Afro-Caribbean community in South Africa to 1930', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 18 (1992), 349–70 and *idem*, 'Forgotten connections, unconsidered parallels: a new agenda for comparative research in South Africa and the Caribbean', *African Studies*, 58 (1999), 133–55.

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previous Garveyist scholarship. Ultimately, this transnational focus leads to conclusions that contrast sharply with the claims of political scientist Paul Rich that Garveyism was a 'rather remote model' in the country's black freedom struggle. Such work confines the UNIA to South Africa's national boundaries, does not consider the impact of Garveyism beyond the UNIA and fails to consider the intricate interplay of religion and politics among South African Garveyites.[7]

## THE 'AMERICAN NEGRO' COMMUNITY IN CAPE TOWN

The 1904 Cape Colony census listed within its borders 438 'Coloured' West Indians,[8] 93 American blacks and another 96 blacks with unspecified origins. These 'sea kaffirs' or 'American Negroes', generic terms that South Africans used to describe westernized, English-speaking blacks from overseas, were primarily British West Indians from British Guyana and the economically depressed islands of Jamaica and Barbados.[9] While some fought in the British West Indian regiments during the South African War (1899–1902), most came to the region as sailors who used their maritime skills and their kinship ties to link up with the Trinidadian dock labor recruiter James Wilson to secure readily available, higher paying stevedoring jobs on Cape Town's docks. They described Cape Town as 'one of the largest and finest cities in the world', a 'really modern city' with a large English-speaking population and a commercial district with buildings, water supply, transportation, sanitation, telephone, telegraph and cable facilities broadly similar to New York and London.[10] Their conspicuous presence on the docks, at

[7] P. Rich, *State Power and Black Politics in South Africa, 1912–1951* (New York, 1996), 39, 43. Similar interpretations include P. Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism* (London, 1970), 92–3, 165–9; and P. Wickins, *The Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of South Africa* (Cape Town, 1978), 72, 205.

[8] I use the term 'Coloured' here to refer to the mixed-race population descended primarily from indigenous Khoisan peoples, Africans, enslaved peoples from Asia and whites. In doing so, I am following the convention of the South African census and other government documents.

[9] The number of 'American Negroes' increased in the Cape Colony by 410 per cent from 1875 to 1891 and by another 138 per cent from 1891 to 1904; most were drawn to the readily available, higher paying work available in the Cape Town docks. M. Charles, '"Soort soek soort": the "American Negro" community in Cape Town, until 1930' (MA thesis, University of Cape Town, 2004), 37. Charles's information is based on the Census of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, 1875, 1891 and 1904. Cape Town was home to a polyglot of migrants from Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas. See R. Hallett, 'Violence and social life in Cape Town', in C. Saunders (ed.), *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, III (Cape Town, 1982), 126–76. Historically, the word 'kaffir', deriving from the Muslim term 'non-believer', has been used by whites generally as an epithet reserved for blacks. However, black South Africans sometimes stripped this term of its derogatory meaning and, as in the phrase 'sea kaffir', used it with some affection.

[10] L. Coppin, *Observations of Persons and Things in South Africa* (Philadelphia, 1905); J. Milton Batson, a British Guyanese sailor in Cape Town in 1916, called it one of the best cities in the world. *Negro World*, 17 Jan. 1931. The African American Frances Hermine Williams compared Cape Town favorably to Richmond, Virginia, her eventual home. For more background on Cape Town, see V. Bickford-Smith, *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice in Victorian Cape Town: Group Identity and Social Practice, 1875–1902*

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a time when the city was becoming a crucial port that connected South Africa to international trading networks, was an important factor in the city's growth.[11] Clements Kadalie, the ICU General Secretary who began to organize Cape Town's dock workers in 1919, recalled:

there was a considerable number of West Indian Negroes at that time. Some of these men were highly cultured, and most of them were employed at the docks as stevedores in various occupations such as shipwrights, foremen, etc.[12]

Some West Indians also became property owners, businessmen and professionals who acquired enough wealth to send their children to English and American universities. Future Garveyite Timothy Robertson, with his Coloured wife, owned a thriving farm, a grocery and several rental properties in Parow, a rural village outside the city that reminded him of his home in British Guyana.[13] Arturo Emile Wattlington, from St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, and another future Garveyite, was the city's first black postman. He also owned property, operated a shop (where he sold American newspapers like the *Chicago Defender*) and financed the American education of two sons. George Brownbill, a stevedore from St. Kitts, also sent both of his sons to America for their education.[14] The American Andrew Jackson sent his son to Edinburgh for medical training. The younger Jackson not only became the only black doctor in late nineteenth-century Cape Town, but also reputedly had the most successful practice in the city.[15] While not all American Negroes experienced such success in Cape Town, as a group they seemed far better off than Africans and most Coloureds, almost all of whom were disenfranchised, coped with squalid living conditions, few educational opportunities and occupied the lowest-paying jobs.[16]

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(Cambridge, 1995); G. Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall: A History of South African 'Coloured' Politics* (Cape Town, 1987); J. Western, *Outcast Cape Town* (Berkeley, 1996); and K. Atkins, 'The Black Atlantic communication network: African American sailors and the Cape of Good Hope connection', *Issue: Journal of Opinion*, 24 (1996), 6–11. For the pre-1910 'honorary white' status of American Negroes, see R. T. Vinson, 'Citizenship over race?: African Americans in American–South African diplomacy, 1890–1925', *World History Connected: The EJournal of Learning and Teaching*, 1 (2004), updated from the original publication in *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Comparative Studies*, 13/14 (2004), http://www.safundi.com/issues/13-14/vinson.asp, accessed 22 Oct. 2005. Peregrino noted the phenomenon of West Indians passing as African Americans. See F. Z. S. Peregrino, 'American or West Indian – which?', *South African Spectator* (*Cape Town*), 23 Aug. 1902.

[11] For the position of stevedores within the dock community, see D. Budlender, 'A history of Stevedores in the Cape Town Docks' (BA thesis, University of Cape Town, 1976); and V. Bickford-Smith, 'Black labour at the docks at the beginning of the twentieth century', in C. Saunders (ed.), *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, 1 (Cape Town, 1979), 75–125.

[12] C. Kadalie, *My Life and the I.C.U.: The Autobiography of a Black Trade Unionist in South Africa* (New York, 1970), 220.

[13] Interview, D. Lyner, 10 July 1998.

[14] *Cape Standard*, 11 May 1936.

[15] Charles, '"Soort soek soort"', 60–2. For Wattlington, see *Negro World*, 22 July 1922; personal communication, Ms. E. Wattlington, 12 Apr. 1998; *The Liberator*, Sept. 1937, *Cape Standard*, 25 May 1937.

[16] P. Limb, 'The African National Congress and the African working classes' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Western Australia, 1997). While not subject to similar restrictions as

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The material success which West Indians achieved in Cape Town was largely unattainable on their home islands. Indeed, they were part of an out-migration of hundreds of thousands of black West Indians to the Americas, Europe and Africa between 1880 and 1930 seeking to escape high unemployment, depressed wages and landlessness in their home islands. C. L. R. James, the activist and scholar who left his native Trinidad as a youth, lamented 'we were black and the only way we could do anything along the lines we were interested in was by going abroad'.[17] West Indian sailors were often the 'last hired and first fired' because many ship captains preferred to hire exclusively white crews; they frequently carried out the least desirable maritime tasks and encountered Jim Crow racial conditions in many ports, particularly in the US South.[18]

Early twentieth-century South Africa's evolving segregationist program increasingly impacted on American Negroes who, before 1910, were 'honorary whites' largely exempt from segregationist legislation.[19] As early as 1896, Jan Smuts, South Africa's post-Union Prime Minister (1918–24; 1939–48) and an internationally respected statesman who helped to found both the League of Nations and the United Nations, exemplified the fearful white racist sentiments that under-girded the 'black peril' paranoia that eventually included American Negroes:

At the southern corner of a vast continent, peopled by over 10,000,000 barbarians, about half a million whites have taken up a position, with a view not only to

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Africans, Coloureds still had to form political organizations like the APO to stave off the continued threat of discriminatory residential, franchise, economic and social measures already applied to Africans.

[17] C. L. R. James, *Spheres of Existence: Selected Writings* (London, 1980), 239. For push factors in Caribbean out-migration, see James, *Holding Aloft*; For a stirring history of maritime radicalism, see P. Linebaugh and M. Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston, 2000). For examples of other diasporic migratory streams to Africa during this time, see also N. Blyden, *The Diaspora in reverse: West Indians in West Africa* (Rochester, 2000).

[18] P. Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London, 1984), Appendix 1: Prize Fighters 1791–1902; H. Mulzac, *A Star to Steer By* (New York, 1963), 78–9. In 1911, the British colonial office acknowledged the hardships of black sailors. British Parliamentary Papers, CD 5133, Committee on Distressed Colonial and Indian Subjects, report presented to both Houses of Parliament, London, Apr. 1910, para. 36 in Cobley, '"Far from home"', 356. For general difficulties experienced by black sailors, see Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*; W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge MA, 1997); and Cobley, '"Far from home"', 351–2.

[19] Vinson, 'Citizenship over race?'. The most draconian example of early twentieth-century South African segregation was the Natives Land Act of 1913, which set aside 93 per cent of the land for whites, approx. 15 per cent of the population, and rendered millions of Africans landless, forcing most to sell their labor cheaply to white-owned mines, farms and other industries. The Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 undergirded a policy that sought to control and restrict the urban influx of Africans, allowing them into the towns only insofar as their labor was necessary to 'minister to the white man's needs'. See W. Beinart and S. Dubow (eds.), *Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth Century South Africa* (London, 1995). For the epidemiological effects of segregationist practices upon blacks, see B. Carton, 'The forgotten compass of death: apocalypse then and now in the social history of South Africa', *Journal of Social History*, 37 (2003), 199–218.

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working out their own destiny, but also of using that position as a basis for lifting up and opening up that vast dead-weight of immemorial barbarism and animal savagery to the light and blessing of ordered civilization. Unless the white race closes its ranks in this country, its position will soon become untenable in the face of that overwhelming majority of prolific barbarism.[20]

West Indians, both working class and professional, were concerned to protect their political rights. In 1903, government officials complained that West Indian dock workers fostered 'notions of Combination and Co-operation amongst the disparate ethnic groups'.[21] Henry Sylvester Williams, the Trinidadian-born organizer of the 1900 Pan-African Conference, lived in Cape Town from 1903 to 1905. He became the first black person admitted to the bar in the Cape Colony and vowed that 'if the Coloured people of South Africa were willing to be kept out of the higher walks of life … their brothers in the West Indies were not'. He established the South African Citizens Defense Committee, which registered enough voters to help elect Dr. Abdul Abdurahman, President of the African Peoples Organization (APO), the leading Coloured advocacy group in the country, to the City Council. Williams also helped to re-write the APO constitution and remained a persistent advocate for racial equality and expanded educational opportunities for blacks.[22] Black South Africans noted that 'American Negroes' were 'highly cultured, tough, hard back-boned … he-man types, aggressive and daring … who considered themselves on equal footing with any white man'.[23]

West Indians were also adherents of a prophetic Christianity. The African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), the venerable African American church, established itself in the region in 1896. In Cape Town, the San Francisco-born Francis McDonald Gow, whose parents hailed from St. Kitts, founded Bethel Memorial Church, an AME institution, in 1898 after hearing the visiting African American Bishop Henry McNeal Turner proclaim 'God was a Negro' and that blacks were a Godly people.[24] Along with the 'Ethiopian' independent black South African churchmen, Turner

[20] W. H. Hancock, *Smuts I: The Sanguine Years, 1870–1919* (Cambridge, 1962), 55–6. For a more current reading of Smuts's racial thought, see S. Marks, 'Before the white man was master and all white men's values prevailed'?: Jan Smuts, race and the South African war', paper presented at the University of Austria (2000).

[21] C. Page, 'Black America in white South Africa: church and state reaction to the A.M.E. Church in Cape Colony and Transvaal, 1896–1910' (Ph.D thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1978), 332.

[22] *Cape Argus*, 26 Aug. 1904. For more on Williams's South African sojourn, see C. Saunders, 'Henry Sylvester Williams in South Africa', *Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa*, 14 (2000); J. Hooker, *Henry Sylvester Williams, Imperial Pan Africanist* (London, 1975), and O. Mathurin, *Henry Sylvester Williams and the Origins of the Pan African Movement* (Westport CT, 1976). On his return to London, Williams also represented the Transvaal Native Congress, BaSotho chiefs and other groups in land disputes; he hosted visiting South Africans like Walter Rubusana and Josiah Gumede and likely mentored Pixley Seme and Alfred Mangena, two African law students who helped found the ANC.

[23] James Ghazu, *Negro World*, 16 July 1932. Ghazu was a black South African sailor who eventually became the President of the South African UNIA in the late 1930s.

[24] Campbell, *Songs of Zion*, 160; Coppin, *Observations of Persons and Things in South Africa*, 13; Bethel means House of God; Gow's son Francis Herman Gow attended

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articulated a 'providential design' thesis that viewed the Atlantic slave trade and New World slavery as part of God's divine plan to expose blacks to the 'civilizing' traits of Christianity. I. N. Fitzpatrick, an African American AME minister in Cape Town in 1901, claimed that the South African AME represented a final stage in God's unfolding plan to have 'American Negroes' transmit the 'light of civilization' to the 'dark continent' to restore Africa's ancient glories:

God sends us back to you, not in chains of iron and steel but chains of gold, bracelets set with pearls and diamonds; not nude but clothed in cashmeres, broadcloth, linens of India and France, with Bibles and banking houses, colleges and seminaries, publishing houses, doctors and lawyers, judges, statesmen and soldiers, preachers and teachers, with property approximating half a billion dollars, besides school and church properties with a large banking account. Are you glad to see us, my brethren?[25]

Before 1920, a generation of 'American Negroes', Coloureds and Africans in Cape Town had pointed to American blacks, particularly Booker T. Washington, as counter-examples to white claims of black inferiority. Washington prescribed black self-help, economic self-sufficiency, industrial education and moral piety as the cornerstones of a gradualist racial uplift program that would provide blacks with the necessary civilizing traits to eliminate the virus of white supremacy from the hearts and minds of whites. In South Africa, black adherence to Washingtonian ideals would hopefully persuade whites to heed the Cape Liberal ideal of 'equal rights for all civilized men'.[26] Every member of the West Indian-American Association, an American Negro mutual aid society, had a picture of Washington and several members owned copies of *Up From Slavery*, Washington's most popular autobiography. Washington's Tuskegee Institute was the most tangible symbol of black institution-building that Bookerites claimed would advance the race. West Indian Alex Morrison, the first pastor of Bethel AME, mixed Washingtonian self-help with the prophetic Christianity exemplified in the Providential Design thesis:

Those dry bones of Africa must come to life and liberty, Ethiopia must stretch forth her hand to God, but she cannot sit still and do it, there must be a shaking and the bones must come together.[27]

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Tuskegee Institute and eventually became the first South African Bishop to preside over the AME's southern Africa mission field.

[25] Quoted from Campbell, *Songs of Zion*, 222. For historical context to the notion of Providential Design, see W. J. Moses, *Alexander Crummell: A Study of Civilization and Discontent* (New York, 1989); and E. Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* (Baltimore, 1994). For the essential ideas of Turner, see E. Redkey, *Respect Black: The Writings and Speeches of Henry McNeal Turner* (New York, 1971). For diasporic blacks, an independent 'Africa for Africans' would be a 'promised land': an emigrant homeland providing historical and cultural grounding and protection.

[26] For an exceptional treatment of the 'Cape Liberal ideal' see T. Keegan, *Colonial South Africa and the Origins of the Racial Order* (Charlottesville, 1996).

[27] Letter of Alexander Morrison to the *South African Spectator*, June 1901.

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In the immediate post-First World War environment of declining real wages, escalating inflation, more intense racialized violence and the failure to extend Wilsonian self-determination principles to blacks, American Negroes continued to regard Washington as an icon of black respectability even though his faith in whites proved to be badly misplaced. The ascent of Garveyism, which added a prophetic 'Africa for the Africans' Christianity to Washington's economic, educational and moral principles, signaled the transformation whereby blacks viewed American Negroes as models *and* as imminent liberators. Marcus Garvey was the modern-day Moses and American Negroes in Cape Town were his most ardent supporters.

## THE BLACK STAR LINE, BLACK SAILORS AND THE MEANING OF GARVEYISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

In May 1919, Marcus Garvey announced the UNIA's plans to operate the Black Star Line (BSL), a black-owned steamship corporation. By September 1919, the UNIA had purchased its first ship, the *Yarmouth*, which they promptly renamed the *Frederick Douglass*.[28] The BSL, along with the Negro Factories Corporation (a string of groceries, laundries and other small businesses) resonated powerfully with Garvey's South African admirers. Before the commonplace usage of airplanes, ships were clear symbols of modernity and emergent nationhood. The BSL most immediately represented the UNIA's apparent technological, military, political and economic abilities to reconstitute African independence. Thus, it is not surprising that black South Africans who were relentlessly told by white segregationists that they were outside the realm of modernity saw the BSL as Garvey's more militant manifestation of Washington's self-reliance ideals: 'We shall redeem Africa only by unity, diligent research and a resolve to build our own schools, colleges, universities, shops and building our own ships'.[29]

Many Garveyites also interpreted the BSL as the opening salvo in a UNIA-led military campaign against white supremacy. In East London, there was a persistent rumor that the 'Americans' would arrive in four ships with weapons that would help Africans kill South African whites.[30] Kenneth Spooner, a West Indian missionary stationed in Rustenburg, proclaimed joyously that 'his people were now on the seas coming to South Africa with a view to beating the European people here, and that in about six months time changes would be observed'.[31] An African known only as 'Mgoja' addressed the Transvaal branch of the ANC with the emphatic cry that

[28] Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey*, 64; Martin, *Race First*, 152–3.

[29] *Negro World*, 14 June 1924.

[30] South African Government Archives (SAGA), Cape Province Depot (CA), 1/KNT 40 N1/9/2: Affidavit of 'Golifili' to Kentani Assistant Magistrate, 14 Dec. 1920.

[31] SAGA, Transvaal Province Depot (NTS), Department of Interior, 'Reports on Bolshevism' 168/74 B, vol. 2: File 7/168/74: Secretary for Justice to Secretary for the Interior, 18 Oct. 1920. Spooner made his remarks at a meeting of the Transvaal National Congress, a regional branch of the African National Congress. Spooner, from Barbados, was the district Superintendant of the Pentecostal Holiness Church in Phokeng, Rustenburg. Born in 1884, he lived in South Africa from 1915 until his death in 1937. For a general overview of Spooner's life, see Mrs. K. E. M. Spooner, *Sketches of the Life of K. E. M. Spooner: Missionary, South Africa* (n.d., n.p.).

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'America had a black fleet and it is coming'.[32] Even non-Garveyites hoped that 'one of the Black Star Liners' would soon visit the city.[33]

For Cape Town Garveyites, UNIA shipping lines would also be vessels that connected the black world, particularly through black sailors disseminating the *Negro World*.[34] Black sailors from the Caribbean and North America served as Pan-African vectors by amplifying these prophecies during their brief visits to the country. A Jamaican sailor identified only as 'Ennis' proclaimed that 'we all come out to South Africa to free our brothers and sisters'.[35] Ennis could have been referring to Ernest Wallace, one of several West Indians that spread Garveyism in Basutoland and the South African interior. Wallace also updated Washington's self-help aphorisms with Garveyist prophetic Christianity, telling Africans to 'work out their own destiny and await the time when the son of God shall come out on his chariot of Fire to redeem his people'.[36] In October 1920, the Natal branch of the ANC convened a meeting in Durban that reportedly attracted over 1,000 Africans. The highlight of the affair was the unscheduled appearance of an American Negro sailor known as 'Moses'. He had recently arrived from New York, site of the UNIA's headquarters, and stated:

> that their leader Marcus Garvey was the man they relied upon, and who would free Africa: that the first vessel of the fleet was named 'Frederick Douglass', and this vessel had been sailing to different places … Africa would be freed … by Marcus Garvey.[37]

For Garveyites in South Africa and around the world, the UNIA was the prevailing government-in-exile for blacks until they could achieve the ultimate objective of an independent Africa. The UNIA, in addition to its aforementioned black capitalist agenda, dispatched commissioners to the League of Nations, viewed Liberia as the beachhead for the return of African-descended peoples and eventual African independence, endorsed political candidates and cultivated the trappings of nationhood with its red, black and green flag, uniformed military processions and national hymns. The 'Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World' articulated the grievances, aims, objectives and guiding philosophy of the UNIA as an anti-white supremacist movement. Accordingly, South African Garveyites like James Thaele, President of the ANC (Western Province) branch,

[32] Hill and Pirio, 'Africa for the Africans', 211.

[33] *African People's Organisation*, 26 June 1920. This newspaper was the eponymous organ of the African Peoples Organization, the country's leading Coloured organization in the 1920s. The APO participated in a transatlantic informational exchange with the *Negro World* which reprinted an APO article in its 13 Nov. 1920 edition. Garvey's boastful claims as 'provisional president of Africa' and the failure of the Black Star Line soon turned the APO against the UNIA.

[34] Nathaniel Ntengo, *Negro World*, 28 Feb. 1925.

[35] SAGA, NTS, Department of Interior, 'Reports on Bolshevism' 168/74B, vol. 2: File 7/168/74: 'Ennis' to Marcus Garvey, 9 May 1920. The South African government apparently intercepted this letter. For more on Wallace, see Edgar, 'Garveyism in Africa', and SAGA, NTS, Department of Interior, 'Reports on Bolshevism' 168/74B, vol.2: File 11/168/74: Natal Principal Immigration Officer to Secretary for the Interior, 2 Nov. 1920.

[36] *Matatiele Mail*, 23 Dec. 1925, in Edgar, 'Garveyism in Africa', 35–6.

[37] SAGA, NTS, Department of Interior, 'Reports on Bolshevism' 168/74B, vol.2: File 7/168/74: Secretary for Justice to Secretary for the Interior, 8 Dec. 1920.

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asserted 'just as the League of Nations is to European governments so are the UNIA ... decrees or proclamations obligatory to us all'.[38] H. L. Davids, President of a local Cape Town UNIA branch, declared that the UNIA charter (which members viewed as their Constitution) was as important to blacks worldwide as the British flag was to Commonwealth nations.[39] James Ghazu, a Cape Town-based sailor who eventually became the general organizer of South African UNIA affairs, proclaimed:

Garveyism is a self-protecting system among the blacks to promote the race socially, economically and in the true form which God the creator of all races on this earth meant. The Negro desires to share in every possible thing that other races enjoy and ... is just as fit to shape its own destiny as other races are.[40]

The UNIA also represented an extension of the Providential Design ideal since black South Africans viewed US-based American Negroes as imminent liberators. Timothy Robertson, the leading UNIA organizer, viewed Garvey as a 'true Moses' who would 'emancipate the children of Ethiopia from the fetters of bondage'.[41] ICU leader Clements Kadalie likewise asserted that:

this movement ... assures every man and woman of his or her salvation. We must therefore, unite with racial pride that at last Africa will be redeemed and all her sons return where nature first put them ... our dear brothers abroad

expected Africans to 'respond to the call for liberty'.[42] Samuel Ncwana, editor of the pro-Garvey ICU newspaper, the *Black Man*, also suggested that Africans 'should look overseas for their liberation'.[43] Garveyites proclaimed that 'even the deaf, dumb and half dead have caught the vision of Mr. Garvey that Africa must be freed from the exploiters' since Garveyism was the 'Siloam Pool' that granted sight to formerly blind and helpless blacks wandering in the wilderness of white supremacy. For blacks awaiting the coming of the Messiah and their subsequent entrance into God's kingdom, the 'Siloam Pool' references were particularly suggestive. The 'Siloam Pool' story, found in John 9:1–39, linked the liberationist prophecies of Isaiah 35:5 and 42:7 with Jesus's most common messianic activity of giving eyesight, in both a physical and spiritual sense, so that 'the works of God can be manifest' in God's chosen people.[44]

Garveyism, according to the white 'heirs of a superior civilization' like Jan Smuts, represented a significant threat to the 'security of the civilized order'.[45] As a result, the government banned virtually all American Negroes from South Africa and even Garvey's strongest critics, such as AME Bishop William T. Vernon, came under government scrutiny. A Cape Town municipal official responded to inquiries by the Portuguese government, which had detained two Mozambicans returning home because they were in

[38] *African World*, 3 May 1925.

[39] *Negro World*, 14 June 1924; Rufus Letsaolo, the West London division President, expresses similar sentiments. *Ibid.* 1 Nov. 1930.

[40] *Ibid.* 20 Nov. 1926.

[41] *Black Man*, Aug. 1920.

[42] *Ibid.*

[43] *Black Man*, Nov. 1920.

[44] The reference to a 'Siloam Pool' is made by Cape Town UNIA Vice-President Richard Ndimande in a letter to the *Negro World*, 22 Nov. 1924. The 'deaf, dumb and half-dead' reference was from ANC member Nathaniel Ntengo, *Negro World*, 23 Aug. 1924.

[45] Jan Smuts quoted in the *Cape Argus*, reprinted by the *Negro World*, 27 Dec. 1924.

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possession of Cape Town UNIA membership certificates by asserting that Garveyism:

Requires careful watching and may develop into a danger to the State. A Black Republic and Socialism appear to be the bedrock of this Association … this present 'negro movement' has a paper circulating here called the 'The Negro World' and that the evolution, amalgamation of native black races and the various changes and movements are, in my opinion, rapidly arriving at a crisis.[46]

The *Cape Argus* claimed breathlessly that approximately 200 'American Negroes' were in the city spreading Garveyist doctrine.[47] The West Indian Protective Society, an American-based anti-UNIA organization, warned the South African government of 'colored persons coming into South Africa from the United States and the Panama Canal' and suggested it ban all UNIA and BSL stockholders. Despite these warnings, the genie was already out of the bottle. Even anti-Garvey black South Africans like the African trade unionist, ANC leader, newspaper editor and future Liberal Party co-founder H. Selby Msimang, a visitor to Cape Town in 1921, lamented that he was:

pestered with questions concerning the 'Back to Africa' movement by people who seemed to sleep in happy dreams of the coming of a Messiah in the person of Marcus Garvey and his army to restore the status quo of the Bantu in the land of their ancestors.[48]

## MARCUS GARVEY AND THE POLITICAL RELIGIOSITY OF THE UNIA

In Cape Town, West Indian dockworkers were amongst the initial recipients of Garveyism. They were particularly dominant in the first two UNIA divisions in Cape Town, the first of which was in existence by July 1920 in Goodwood and Parow, adjoining villages just outside the city. Unfortunately, we know very little about this particular division, except that Robertson, the former ship's cook, founded it and its officials inaugurated later UNIA divisions. Robertson became the official UNIA organizer in Cape Town, charged with distributing Garveyist literature, selling Black Star Line stock, getting 'every true African' to join the UNIA and helping to establish the Cape Town chapter, in existence by 1922.[49] West Indians dominated the leadership of this branch, including William Jackson (President), J. Caesar Allen (General Secretary) Arthur Emile Wattlington and

[46] *Negro World*, Dec. 1922; Hill and Pirio, 'Africa for the Africans', 225.

[47] *Cape Argus*, 29 Jan. 1923.

[48] H. Selby Msimang quoted in *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 13 Aug. 1921.

[49] Interview, D. Lyner, 10 July 1998; *Black Man*, Aug. 1920. H. L. Davids, who succeeded Robertson as President of the Goodwood division, also helped to establish the Cape Town UNIA and was the first speaker at the UNIA charter unveiling of the West London branch. *Negro World*, 8 Nov. 1924. This chapter's actual location was probably in the now razed District Six section of Cape Town. At this time, many West Indians also lived in District Six, a polyglot area consisting of Coloureds, Africans, whites and foreigners in the western section of Cape Town eventually razed by the apartheid government in the 1960s and 1970s. It is unclear exactly when the Cape Town UNIA branch began; its members helped organize the Claremont chapter in February 1922. *Negro World*, 18 Mar. 1922.

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James Gumbs (Advisory Board).[50] These men, in turn, involved themselves in the various mass meetings, ceremonies and socials of the newer West London, Woodstock and Claremont divisions, all located in the southern suburbs of Cape Town.[51]

The newer UNIA divisions had greater Coloured and African leadership than the earlier branches. The Claremont division began in 1922 with 33 members and featured a predominantly Coloured officer corps.[52] The Woodstock division also formed in 1922 and included former Cape Town UNIA officers M. Emmanuel Johnson, a West Indian, and Richard Ndimande, an African, as president and secretary, respectively. Johnson also succeeded Robertson as the UNIA Organizer.[53] Mrs. C. C. Johnson, possibly the President's wife, was the division's Treasurer. A later secretary was A. J. Maphike, an African man who named his son Garvey Arend Maphike and wrote a moving obituary of Garvey.[54] The West London (present-day Athlone) division began in 1924 with officers of the other chapters and ANC (WP) President James Thaele present. This division had a Coloured leadership with J. J. Samuels as President, a Mrs. W. Samuels as Treasurer and Secretary and a Reverend Schuman as the division chaplain. West London, like their Claremont counterparts, conducted their affairs in Afrikaans.[55] Meetings also attracted a wide array of visitors like Thaele, ICU head Clements Kadalie and visiting American Negro sailors like Peter Johnson, who 'said many encouraging and inspiring things'.[56] Meetings ended, sometimes after three hours, with an officer making stirring appeals for new members followed by final prayers.

Cape Town Garveyites were also important distributors of Garveyism throughout southern Africa. Thaele's unabashed Garveyism influenced Wellington Butelezi, a young Zulu man who lived briefly with Thaele in Cape Town and who would later inspire residents of the Transkei with prophecies of imminent UNIA liberation.[57] Ghazu, President of a Cape Town UNIA division in the mid-1930s and the former sailor who claimed to have met UNIA personnel in America, also helped to establish a UNIA division in the Qumbu, Transkei district.[58] As early as 1920, Cape Town Garveyites distributed Garveyist books, pamphlets and the *Negro World* to Kimberley's House of Athlyi, a church that posited Garvey as an apostle of

[50] It is also possible that William Chaswell, the division's Treasurer and musical director, was also of Caribbean origin.

[51] See, for example *Negro World*, 22 July 1922, 8 Nov. 1924.

[52] One example is in the *Negro World*, 27 Jan. 1923.

[53] SAGA, NTS, Department of Interior, 'Monthly Police Report': File 3/1064/18: 11 Aug. 1922.

[54] *Guardian*, 25 July 1940. There is scant evidence for the ethnic composition of the membership, though a Coloured man 'brother Jantjes' was a prominent member, *Negro World*, 29 Nov. 1924.

[55] *Negro World*, 8 Nov. 1924. Claremont, the founding place of the APO, was predominantly Coloured, Woodstock was mostly working-class Coloured, West London (present-day Athlone) was also primarily Coloured while Goodwood and Parow became increasingly white suburbs by the 1940s. See Western, *Outcast Cape Town*, 71.

[56] *Negro World*, 13 Feb. 1926. Johnson was en route to South America.

[57] Vinson, 'In the time of the Americans', 116–53; Edgar, 'Dr. Wellington', 31–57.

[58] Vinson, 'In the time of the Americans', 190–1.

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God and herald of the coming apocalypse.[59] Samuel Ncwana, editor of the *Black Man*, established UNIA divisions in Namibia in 1921 and migrant workers in Cape Town from Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Zambia smuggled Garveyist materials back to their native lands.

With a few notable exceptions, scholars have failed to appreciate fully the deeply religious character of the UNIA and the extent that Marcus Garvey utilized religion as a political tool to help fulfill his ultimate 'Africa for the Africans' objective. Garvey himself delighted in 'playing preacher' amongst his childhood friends and was raised in his parents' Wesleyan Methodist church before he converted to Catholicism. For Garvey, the UNIA was not a religion but a 'great, all-comprehensive, racial missionary movement, a holy cause to which every Negro should give undivided allegiance'.[60] He imbued religion with political overtones, proclaiming that 'God in the affairs of men is on the side of the strongest battalion'.[61] Like his many followers, Garvey also saw clear parallels between himself and Jesus Christ: both were persecuted leaders of a revolutionary gospel that created a mass movement of oppressed peoples that would thrive long after their respective lifetimes.

Cape Town UNIA divisions held their Sunday afternoon meetings in accordance with the standardized ritual order stipulated by the American UNIA headquarters.[62] Meetings opened with an elaborate procession and an officer explaining UNIA aims, objects and latest news to non-members. Members reaffirmed their commitment to the aim of a providentially designed African independence through the singing of missionary hymns 'From Greenland's Icy Mountains', 'Onward Christian Soldiers' and the recitation of the UNIA Universal Prayer.[63] The meetings would then feature readings from the *Negro World*, specifically transcripts of Garvey's speeches, followed by stirring orations that stressed Garveyite principles of self-help, unity, education and racial uplift as the means toward 'African redemption'.

[59] R. A. Rogers, *The Holy Piby: The Blackman's Bible* (Kingston, 2000 [1924]), 55; Vinson, 'In the time of the Americans', 53; *Black Man*, Nov. 1920; Robert A. Hill, 'Leonard P. Howell and millenarian visions in early Rastafari religions in Jamaica', *Epoche Journal of the History of Religions*, 9 (1981), 30–71; Hill and Pirio, 'Africa for the Africans', 219.

[60] *Negro World*, 5 Dec. 1925.

[61] Randall K. Burkett has written extensively on the religious aspects of the UNIA, including *Black Redemption: Churchmen Speak for the Garvey Movement* (Philadelphia, 1978); *Garveyism as a Religious Movement: The Institutionalization of a Black Civil Religion* (London, 1978); and 'The religious ethos of the Universal Negro Improvement Association', in G. Wilmore (ed.), *African American Religious Studies* (Durham, 1989), 60–81. For Garvey's early religious experiences, see Martin, *Race First*, 68; *Negro World*, 30 Jan. 1932.

[62] In addition to the Cape Town UNIA chapters, there were also chapters in Pretoria, Evaton and New Clare. UNIA membership cards, UNIA Central Division (New York) files, Schomburg Collection, New York Public Library. Though Garvey disavowed any connection to Butelezi, several of these UNIA chapters paid dues to UNIA headquarters and their officers corresponded directly with Garvey. There were reported UNIA chapters in East London and Marabastad in 1921.

[63] George Alexander McGuire, the UNIA's chaplain, compiled *The Universal Negro Ritual, Containing Forms, Prayers, and Offices for Use in the U.N.I.A.* in 1921. This organizational guidebook included the Universal Prayer; Hill (ed). *The Marcus Garvey Papers*, 9, 337 fn. 1.

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These meetings also had several musical selections and concluded with the singing of the Ethiopian national anthem.

Inevitably, speakers referenced Psalms 68:31 which proclaimed that 'princes shall come out of Egypt and Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands to God'. For Garveyites, Garvey was the prince delivering his people from Pharoah; Ethiopia symbolized a black nation in communion with a God that had assigned it a providential role in world affairs. They compared their experiences in segregationist South Africa to the children of Israel and viewed Garvey as their Moses who would lead them from the Pharoah's Egypt that was segregationist South Africa.[64] William Jackson, the Cape Town UNIA President, declared:

Ethiopia will be taken naked from Egypt to a foreign country, there to be lynched, whipped, gimecrowed (jimcrowed), killed and finally, after experiencing many vicissitudes of torments and misery, will return to Africa and impart the civilization and knowledge obtained in the foreign country to his people.[65]

These people, according to Jackson, were the

15,000,000 negroes of America who have to-day reached the highest scientific attainments in the world. Those Negroes are now preparing to come back to the land of their forefathers and impart the knowledge gained in foreign countries to their brethren in Africa. Your slogan must be One Aim, One God, and One Destiny.[66]

Garvey was the modern-day Moses that transmitted God's mandate, and Garveyites were soldiers 'proselytizing for the UNIA orthodoxy', who 'preached the doctrine of the UNIA', 'the first gospel of Garveyism' and proclaimed that the *Negro World* 'must be a Bible to us'.[67] In essence, Garveyism was the means whereby blacks could fulfill their racial potential 'in the true form which God, the creator of all races on this earth meant'.[68] Garveyites also used quotes from the organizational *Universal Negro Catechism* to fortify their children against the false religion of white supremacy, particularly in their assertions that God, Jesus and other prominent biblical characters were at least partially black and that God's kingdom was multi-racial:

There before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne … and they cried out in a loud voice: 'salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne'.[69]

UNIA divisions held sacred concerts characterized by the singing of missionary hymns, the ceremonial reading of the Universal Prayer and biblical citations to support core Garveyist themes. For example, Garveyites found biblical sanction for their core theme of self-determination with Exodus 14:15, in which God chastised Moses and the Israelites to avoid complete dependence on his divine favor. UNIA speakers also referenced

[64] For examples, see *Negro World*, 18 Mar. 1922, 4 Nov. 1922.
[65] SAGA, NTS, 'Cape ANC meeting, 1923': File 3/1064/18.
[66] SAGA, NTS GG 1556 no. 50/1058, 3 June 1923. The slogan, 'One God, One Aim, One Destiny', a UNIA invention was on UNIA printed material like the *Negro World*.
[67] *Negro World*, 25 Feb. 1922, 14 June 1924, 20 June 1925.
[68] *Ibid*. 20 Nov. 1926.
[69] See Revelation 7:9–10.

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Genesis 1:26, which, like Acts 17:26, provided biblical support for their conviction that God created humans in his own image and that there were no racial caveats in the principle of human equality. Religion was also central to the family-friendly UNIA social events that were a private refuge from the hostile gaze of unfriendly whites.[70] The Claremont division social included the unveiling of a charter accompanied by readings from Genesis and declarations thanking God for delivering Garvey to lead his followers to 'victory and freedom'.[71] These socials included performances by the UNIA band, a musical cavalcade of piano, violin and vocal performances, along with comic parodies and refreshments of 'tea, cakes, fruit and minerals'.

Cape Town Garveyites also found deeper religious meanings in Garvey's politically motivated conviction on mail fraud. In 1923, a New York court convicted Garvey on a single count of mail fraud, relating to his mailed solicitations for UNIA sympathizers to buy BSL stock. In 1925, the United States Circuit Court of Appeals denied Garvey's appeal, the United States Supreme Court refused to hear his case and the government jailed him until 1927, whereupon they promptly deported him from America. Garvey's deportation represented the culmination of the United States Department of Justice's long crusade to oust Garvey, a campaign that since 1919 had become the personal vendetta of later Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director J. Edgar Hoover. UNIA divisions and Garveyites throughout the world, including those in Cape Town, protested Garvey's incarceration with a flood of petitions, letters and resolutions to American government officials, sent monies and letters of support to Garvey and UNIA headquarters. They also organized a series of mass rallies and 'Marcus Garvey Days', usually on the first Sunday of each month.[72]

Cape Town Garveyites no longer made moral appeals to white Christians as previous generations of black Christians had done and instead prophesied that God would deal harshly with the enemies of Garveyism. Woodstock UNIA Vice-President Richard Ndimande predicted that all of Garvey's foes would 'eventually realize their grievous error as Jews did after crucifying our elderly brother Jesus Christ'.[73] James Thaele viewed the American government as a modern-day 'Pontius Pilate' that would eventually succumb to Garvey's 'adamant stand in championing the sacred cause of freedom for the Negro people'.[74] J. C. Humble, Cape Town division chaplain, evoked Jeremiah 23 to issue a stirring 'jeremiad' against unjust whites while also evoking notions of Providential Design in assigning a glorious future for blacks:

[70] Harry Dugmore, 'Becoming a somebody: fraternal lodges among the coloured elite in Johannesburg in the 1920s and 1930s', *African Studies*, 51 (1992), 22.

[71] *Negro World*, 22 July 1922, 27 Jan. 1923. There is virtually no extant evidence that describes the occupations of Claremont members. The relatively high economic status of Caribbeans, their UNIA fellows and the purchase of musical instruments and lessons reflect some disposable income and/or a collective effort to save monies for these items.

[72] For example, the 1 Dec. 1923 edition of the *Negro World* reported that the Cape Town division contributed $18.12 toward Garvey's Defense Fund while Fitzherbert Headley's ten dollar pledge was one of several Namibian UNIA contributors. *Negro World*, 12 Sept. 1925.

[73] *Negro World*, 27 Oct. 1923.

[74] *Ibid*. 17 Nov. 1923, 30 May 1925.

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I will bestow punishment on you for the evil you have done declares the Lord. I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture where they will be fruitful and increase in number. The days are coming when I will raise up … a King who will reign wisely … then they will live in their own land.[75]

Fitzherbert Headley intoned:

The Lord is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The Lord takes vengeance on his foes and maintains his wrath against his enemies. The Lord is slow to anger and great in power; the Lord will not leave the guilty unpunished. His way is in the whirlwind and the storm and the clouds are the dust of his feet.[76]

UNIA members used the Marcus Garvey days as days of prayer and occasions to reaffirm their loyalty to the UNIA, the 'gateway to Ethiopia's perennial, ancient glory', and to thank God for delivering Garvey. Garveyites continued to draw from inspirational biblical texts as they remained committed to 'fight the good fight' and to continue to plant the 'seeds of Garveyism' while awaiting the imminent arrival of 'Jesus on behalf of his people' so that righteous but persecuted blacks would claim the kingdom of heaven.[77] ANC member A. J. Maphike declared, 'the Almighty God will lead his people' in the successful victory against 'the seemingly unbreakable odds of the present ruling powers of the world'. Ultimately, God would 'open wide the gates of Africa' and create a new Jerusalem for his children.[78]

## GARVEYISM AND PROPHETIC CHRISTIANITY IN THE ICU AND ANC

Helen Bradford, scholar of the ICU and South Africa's interwar black freedom struggle, chronicles the strong linkages between the ICU, Garveyism and the general 'American Negro' phenomenon, particularly in rural South Africa.[79] I would like to build upon her important work by emphasizing the ideological continuities between Washington and Garvey in the minds of South African-based Garveyites and by elaborating on the West Indian presence within the ICU in the urban context of Cape Town. In August 1920, the *Black Man*, a Cape Town newspaper, proclaimed that 'we should show our cordial appreciation of the very first step taken by the

[75] *Ibid*. 20 June 1925. In quoting Humble, I am paraphrasing Jeremiah 23:1–8.

[76] *Negro World*, 2 May 1925.

[77] There are a number of biblical references in these quotes. The phrase 'fight the good fight' can be found in the context of Paul's exhortations to his young charge Timothy to spread the gospel of Christianity. See 1 Timothy 1:18, 6:12 and 2 Timothy 4:7. The reference to Ethiopia echoes the prophetic Psalms 68:31; while the promise of Jesus' return can be found in Matthew 5:13, Zechariah 14 and Acts 1:10. *In my view*, Psalms 68:31 should be read within the context of the larger themes of Psalm 68, namely the supremacy of the God of Israel and divinely ordained violence in favor of his chosen people against un-Godly peoples.

[78] *Negro World*, 2 May 1925, 'The Gates of Africa' refers to Revelation 21:25; the fulfillment of God's prophecy to Isaiah 60:11. Maphike quote is from *Negro World*, 16 May 1925. Mothiba quote is from *Negro World*, 11 July 1925.

[79] Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom*, 77–8, 93–4, 126–7, 143, 214–15, 222.

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Hon. Marcus Garvey to show his solidarity with us … Liberty and freedom calls upon … Africans to respond'.[80] Several months earlier, the Malawian Clements Kadalie, an emerging political leader in the city, declared to comrades that his 'essential object is to be the great African Marcus Garvey and I don't mind of how much I shall pay for that education'.[81] The *Black Man*, which also paraphrased Washingtonian catchphrases ('dip down your buckets'), was not a publication of the UNIA, but the ICU. Kadalie, who became inspired to enter 'public life' after reading *Up From Slavery*, was not a UNIA officer, but the ICU General Secretary. Kadalie and other ICU leaders exploited the popularity of Garveyism by issuing ICU membership cards decorated with the UNIA colors of red, black and green. They also affected American Negro accents to the extent that some black South Africans thought that they were 'American Negro leaders who had come to deliver them from slavery'.[82]

At least five West Indians based in Cape Town served on the ICU National Executive which they supposedly attempted to transform into an 'auxiliary of the UNIA'.[83] In January 1920, the ICU elected West Indians A. James King and James Gumbs as President and Vice-President respectively and in 1925, M. Emmanuel Johnson, the UNIA Organizer and Cape Town UNIA President became a Junior Vice-President on the ICU National Council and the local agent for the *Negro World*. Henry Tyamzashe, an ICU member, described Johnson as 'of a religious nature, being quiet, yet of a very resolute, pleasant, and polite disposition … He was one of the "Silent Strong men" of the National Council'.[84] Gumbs, a shipwright and former chemist, in addition to being an executive officer of the Cape Town UNIA branch, would become Chairman and in 1925, President of the ICU. Gumbs also had significant control of the ICU's finances, as ICU officers from Durban and Johannesburg journeyed to Cape Town specifically to convince him to release four hundred pounds of union money toward organizational expenses in Johannesburg. Tyamzashe had fond memories of Gumbs:

> Gumbs was a black gentleman in the true sense of the word, and conducted ICU Conferences with dignity, fairness, wisdom and cheerfulness. One could not curry favour with him; he was as straight as die. Although Kadalie and some of his cronies went 'all out' to have Gumbs defeated at two presidential elections, Gumbs was returned by a big majority every time … He died at Cape Town in 1928 with the presidential colours flying over his grave … HE WAS A MAN.[85]

Kadalie recalls that Gumbs 'had a good loud voice and was well respected by all'; he used his commanding presence to endorse ICU-friendly local

[80] *Black Man*, Aug. 1920.

[81] 'C. Kadalie to S. Ncwana, 20 May 1920', Killie Campbell African Library, University of Natal, J. S. Marwick Papers in Hill and Pirio 'Africa for the Africans', 215. Kadalie later claimed that he aggressively opposed West Indian Garveyite attempts to turn the ICU into a 'UNIA auxiliary'. [82] Hill and Pirio, 'Africa for the Africans', 215.

[83] Cobley, 'Forgotten connections', 135; Kadalie, *My Life*, 220.

[84] H. D. Tyamzashe, *Summarized History of the ICU*, 48, A. L. Saffery Papers, University of the Witwatersrand, A1178–79, file B5-1941.

[85] Tyamzashe, Summarized History of the ICU, 48–9.

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political candidates and addressed audiences with promises that 'we' – meaning American Negroes – would soon reclaim Africa for the Africans.[86]

The West Indian representation within the ICU was only a microcosm of their ubiquitous presence in a host of Cape Town organizations. Gumbs, the ICU President, was also a member of the UNIA Advisory Board, the Ancient Order of the Free Gardeners, the Pick-Wick Cooperative Club and the West Indian-American Association. James Lyner was a member of the West Indian–American Association, the ICU, the UNIA and also was a Black Star Line shareholder. James King was an early ICU President, a UNIA member and the Secretary of the Pick-Wick Cooperative Club. J. Caesar Allen, Emile Wattlington and William Jackson belonged to the UNIA and the West Indian American Association.[87]

Garveyites were also an active force in the resurgent ANC.[88] Though two successive national ANC Presidents, the Reverend Zaccheus Mahabane and Josiah Gumede expressed support for Garveyism, ANC (Western Province) President James Thaele, who was also the ANC's national Minister of Education, was the primary bridge between the ANC and the UNIA.[89] Thaele, from present-day Lesotho, had received two BA degrees (one in liberal arts, the other in theology) from historically black Lincoln University (PA) in the United States had returned to South Africa in 1922 a committed Garveyite. He soon began speaking at UNIA meetings, asserting repeatedly that black salvation 'solely depends on the Negroes themselves' and that 'Negroes will set up their own government in Africa, with rulers of their own race' because 'the legions of Hell (whites) cannot stay the onward march of the Kushite race'.[90] Thaele also edited the *Workers Herald*, the ICU newspaper, and later became the founding editor of the heavily Garveyist *African World*, which a rival newspaper described as in 'American Negro' interests.[91] In the *African World* and in his open-air political speeches, Thaele declared a racial affinity with 'American Negroes, our kith and kin' and looked upon the UNIA as 'the biggest thing today in Negro modern organizations … to be scrutinized, imbibed and assimilated' by Africans.[92]

The UNIA and ANC shared resources to protest segregationist laws like the Natives (Urban Areas) Act (1923) and coordinated the Marcus Garvey

[86] Kadalie, *My Life*, 45, 99, 220; Wickins, *The ICU*, 79, 114, 156; Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom*, 126.

[87] For Gumbs's organizational affiliations, see J. Mancoe, *First Edition of the Bloemfontein Bantu and Coloured People's Directory* (Bloemfontein, 1934), 70. For Lyner, see his membership certificates, documents now in author's possession. For King, see *Black Man*, Aug. 1920, and documents in the author's possession. For Wattlington, Jackson and Allen, see *Negro World*, 12 Nov. 1921, 4 Nov. 1922 and documents in the author's possession.

[88] For coverage of the ANC in the Western Cape during this period see W. Hofmeyr, 'Agricultural crisis and rural organisation in the Cape: 1929–1933' (MA thesis, University of Cape Town, 1985); Interview, W. Brooks, 22 June 1998.

[89] A. Kemp and R. T. Vinson, 'Poking holes in the sky: Professor James Thaele, American Negroes and modernity in segregationist South Africa', *African Studies Review*, 44 (2000), 141–59.

[90] *Negro World*, 22 Aug. 1925, 4 Nov. 1922.

[91] *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 30 July 1925.

[92] *African* World, 3 May 1925, 23 May 1925, 8 Aug. 1925; *Negro World*, 4 July 1925.

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Day mass meetings on the first Sunday of each month throughout Garvey's incarceration.[93] Other ANC personnel like Provincial Secretary Bransby Ndobe attended Cape Town UNIA meetings and translated Garvey's classic exposition 'African fundamentalism' into his native seSotho to facilitate wider distribution, while the Jamaican Arthur McKinley combined his ANC membership with a fervent Garveyism. Other ANC members like Frank Mothiba and Nathaniel Ntengo affirmed their Garveyism in letters to the *Negro World*.[94] During the 1924 election, UNIA, ICU and ANC members formed an anti-South African Party (SAP), spurred on by government massacres of blacks in Port Elizabeth, the Israelites at Bulhoek, the Bondelswaarts in Southwest Africa and the SAP's general repression of labor activity on the Rand and in Cape Town in the early 1920s. Unfortunately, their support of James Hertzog's victorious National Party yielded little tangible reward, as the new Prime Minister soon introduced his segregationist bills, including the ultimately successful effort to eliminate the franchise for blacks in the Cape.[95] The UNIA and ANC also held mass protest meetings during and after the infamous Standerton murder case, where Johannes Labuschagne, a white Transvaal farmer had brutally whipped, then murdered Clara Ndhlovu, his black employee. The Standerton jury found Labuschagne guilty of common assault, not murder, and sentenced him to a mere six months' hard labor.[96]

UNIA members looked favorably upon emerging nations of color, particularly Japan, whose rising global prestige could be measured locally by the fact that previously spurned Japanese ships could now dock in Cape Town. They also felt an affinity to anti-colonial movements in India, Egypt and Ireland. This admiration sometimes led to inter-ethnic organizing in Cape Town, with one example being the UNIA, ANC and Cape Indian Council co-organized political rally at the city hall. This rally featured the visiting Indian nationalist and poet Sarojina Naidoo who, after listening to a Garvey speech on gramophone, enthused, 'this program as laid down by your leader, Marcus Garvey, is the only solution to the emancipation of the Africans'.[97] Indeed, Garveyites saw Indian nationalism as an inspiration to their own efforts, as Thaele noted that Indians had rallied together when the British colonial government had jailed Mohandas Gandhi in India. In addition to Gandhi, Garveyites also looked favorably upon the Egyptian

[93] SAGA, NTS, Department of Interior, 'Reports on Bolshevism': File 3/1064/18; *Negro World*, 18 July 1925, 24 Oct. 1925. One example is a Woodstock UNIA meeting on 2 Jan. 1927. See *Negro World*, 5 Mar. 1927. For a few examples, see *Negro World*, 20 June 1925, 4 July 192, 22 Aug. 192, 6 Mar. 1926, 5 Mar. 1927, 18 July 1925, 24 Apr. 1926 and 1 Dec. 1923.

[94] *Negro World*, 12 Sept. 1925, 30 Apr. 1927, 23 Aug. 1924 and 14 Feb. 1925. For McKinley, see R. Edgar, *An African American in South Africa: The Travel Notes of Ralph J. Bunche* (Athens OH, 1992).

[95] For more information on the Hertzog Bills and interwar segregation, see generally S. Dubow, *Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid in South Africa, 1919–1936* (New York, 1989). See also R. Edgar, *Because They Chose the Plan of God: The Story of the Bulhoek Massacre* (Johannesburg, 1988); G. Lewis, 'The Bondelswaarts rebellion of 1922' (MA thesis, Rhodes University, 1977); *Negro World*, 16 Aug. 1924. Ndimande claimed that black support for Hertzog was crucial to his election. For a view at variance with Ndimande's interpretation, see Wickins, *The ICU*, 79–80.

[96] *Negro World*, 15 Nov. 1924.

[97] *Ibid*. 17 May 1924.

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nationalist movement of Mustapha Pasha and the Irish nationalist movement under Eamon de Valera.[98]

The South African state forged ahead with an accelerated segregationist program during the interwar years that foreshadowed the apartheid tenet of 'separate development' as the primary means to maintain 'white civilization'. In 1924, Jan Smuts argued that 'racial distinctions must be recognized as inevitable within certain limits'. South African Foreign Minister Eric Louw, on a Phelps-Stokes visit to Tuskegee in 1931, defended South Africa's segregationist policy as a means to let blacks develop within their own separate territories while safeguarding the interests of whites 'who have brought civilization and culture to South Africa and are responsible for its maintenance'.[99]

For Garveyites in South Africa, the atrocities of ungodly whites who abided by what James Thaele called the John Hawkins–Queen Elizabeth covenant of British imperialism proved that they, not blacks, were far removed from the kingdom of God.[100] Thaele declared that Jesus Christ, 'the Nazarene of old taught by precept and example' unlike 'the white man [who] has failed morally here in Africa to govern the subject race in the light of Christianity'.[101] Thaele, like his Ethiopian forerunners, pointed to the AME, a 'militant Negro religious organization', as the premier example for black religious institutional autonomy.[102] Richard Ndimande, the Woodstock UNIA Vice-President, pointed to the Standerton murder as proof that 'white Christians of Africa kill us at their own pleasure'. Ndimande complained angrily that the killing of 'black men and women is a national pastime. The wrongs done to us by these white Christians in this part of the globe is immeasurable. We shall never forget nor forgive'.[103]

Garveyites represented those blacks that even Jan Smuts admitted no longer 'looked to whites as gods' and instead yearned for the '12 million teachers in America who will come and teach us the true gospel'.[104] Garvey, like Jesus Christ, promised his followers that he would never forsake them, that they should 'look for him in the whirlwind', an oblique reference to the prophetic Old Testament Book of Nahum.[105] West Indian Garveyites mined similar territory in their prophetic warnings of impending divine wrath of un-Christian whites:

There's a curse upon your union, fearful sounds are in the air; As if thunderbolts were framing answers to the natives' prayer; you may offer human victims, like the heathen priests of old; you have slaughtered many natives for their diamonds and gold; you can't stay the whirlwind when the storm begins to break; and our God in judgment calls for the natives' sake; and your sin-cursed union shall be shaken to its base; till you learn that justice is the heritage of every race.[106]

[98] *Ibid*. 20 June 1925.

[99] *Ibid*. 25 Apr. 1931; *Cape Argus* reprinted in *Negro World*, 27 Dec. 1924.

[100] Hawkins was the late sixteenth-century British navigator, merchant and pirate who became Britain's first major slave trader. Queen Elizabeth I's reign, 1558 to 1603, saw an increase in British power and prestige across the globe.

[101] *African World*, 23 May 1925.

[102] *Negro World*, 17 Nov. 1923.

[103] *Ibid*. 22 Nov. 1924.

[104] *Ibid*. 24 Jan. 1931.

[105] Marcus Garvey, 'First message to the Negroes of the world from Atlanta prison', 10 Feb. 1925, in Amy Jacques Garvey (ed.), *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey* (Dover MA, 1986), 95–6.

[106] *Negro World*, 2 May 1925.

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Though detailed information on Cape Town UNIA chapters after 1926 is scant, Garveyism continued to circulate in the city. Garveyites like Rufus Letsaolo maintained contact with the American UNIA and McKinley remained a Cape Town personality throughout the 1930s with his loquacious and satirical pro-Garvey public speeches. Thaele presided over a Cape Town UNIA meeting in 1944 and one Francis Lekakue, wrote to America sometime after 1945 requesting information on the UNIA's School of African Philosophy. A Cape Town UNIA branch existed as late as 1952.[107] Other Garveyites, like Emile Wattlington, Zach Masopha and A. J. Maphike became particularly active in the Hands off Abyssinia campaign that raised funds for Abyssinian war refugees, refused to offload supplies for Italian ships and created a united front against fascism during the Italo-Abyssinian conflict as well as leftist and trade unionist organizations in the 1930s and 1940s.[108]

The American Negro population in Cape Town, while still conspicuous, appears to have declined numerically after the 1930s. South African immigration bans on American Negroes, which began after 1915, declining economic opportunities and hardening South African racism made the city a less desirable destination for later generations of black sailors. Between 1902, when American Negroes J. and Judith Murphy left Cape Town for the Americas and 1944, the year Henry Wilford Jones left for his native Jamaica, several other American Negroes returned to the Western Hemisphere. Frances Hermine Williams, the grand-daughter of Bethel AME founder Francis M. Gow, moved to Richmond, Virginia, in 1939 and the sons of Emile Wattlington and George Brownbill were probably not the only children of American Negroes to remain in America after completing their university studies there.[109] The absorption of American Negroes into Coloured communities also factored into their numerical decline. By the 1930s, American Negro men, almost all of whom married Coloured women, fathered children who were eventually identified primarily as Coloured, though many remained intensely aware of their Caribbean heritage.[110] Yet, American Negroes continued to make a discernible impact in Cape Town. For example, prosperous Parow businessman Timothy Robertson bequeathed property and money to a wide variety of black institutions, especially the AME church. Robertson's esteem was such that white authorities allowed him and his wife to remain in the whites-only area of Cape Town until their deaths in the late 1960s.[111]

[107] The Marcus Garvey and UNIA Papers Website: *U.N.I.A. timeline from the Marcus Garvey and U.N.I.A. Papers Project* (available at www.isop.ucla.edu).

[108] Personal communication with Ray Alexander, 2 July 1998; *Guardian*, 15 Dec. 1937; 'South African Railway and Harbour Workers Union', Ray and Jack Simons Papers: Manuscript Division, University of Cape Town; Budlender, 'A history of Stevedores in Cape Town docks', 28.

[109] Charles, '"Soort soek soort"', 62–3; for the Brownbill children, see *Cape Standard*, 11 May 1936; for the Wattlington children, see *Cape Standard*, 30 Mar. 1937.

[110] Interviews, J. Timm, 20 June 1998; W. Brooks, 8 July 1998; A. Noble, 10 July 1998; and D. Lyner, 10 July 1998.

[111] In November 2003, Misha Charles, a young African American woman who wrote an MA thesis on 'American Negroes' in Cape Town at the University of Cape Town hosted a joyous reunion of 14 families descended from American Negroes at the District Six museum of Cape Town.

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Segregationist South Africa's ever-increasing restrictions on blacks sparked the interwar political upsurge that reflected a profound loss of faith in British notions of 'fair play' and justice toward Africans. As a result, blacks in South Africa looked to Garvey, the UNIA and 'American Negroes' as not just exemplars of progress in modern civilization but also as divinely ordained liberators. James Thaele claimed that religion and politics were inseparable and evoked the image of 'the prophet Isaiah breathing politics' to support his claim.[112] Thaele's provocative claim captures the Christian-informed political worldviews of South African Garveyites. A major theme of the Old Testament book of Isaiah forecasts apocalyptic destruction of the un-Godly nations that persecute those chosen persons in Judah who have maintained their covenantal relationship to God. Isaiah also predicts the rise of a Davidic king that would herald a messianic golden age. Thaele and other South African-based Garveyites believed fervently that Garvey and the UNIA would unify and deliver them, a Godly people, from Babylonian South Africa. The resurrection of Jesus Christ, the divine Davidic King for Christians, would also begin a messianic age whereby racist whites would suffer their Judgment Day and a redeemed and independent 'Africa for Africans' would take center stage in a new world order. Prophetic Garveyist Christianity, far from being a 'remote political ideal', was central to the transnational and multi-organizational black political consciousness and activity in interwar South Africa.

[112] James Thaele, 'Christianity, basis of Native policy?', *Workers Herald*, 21 Dec. 1923 quoted in T. Karis and G. Carter (eds.), *From Protest to Challenge: Documents of African Politics in South Africa, 1882–1964* (Palo Alto, 1972), I, 216.

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