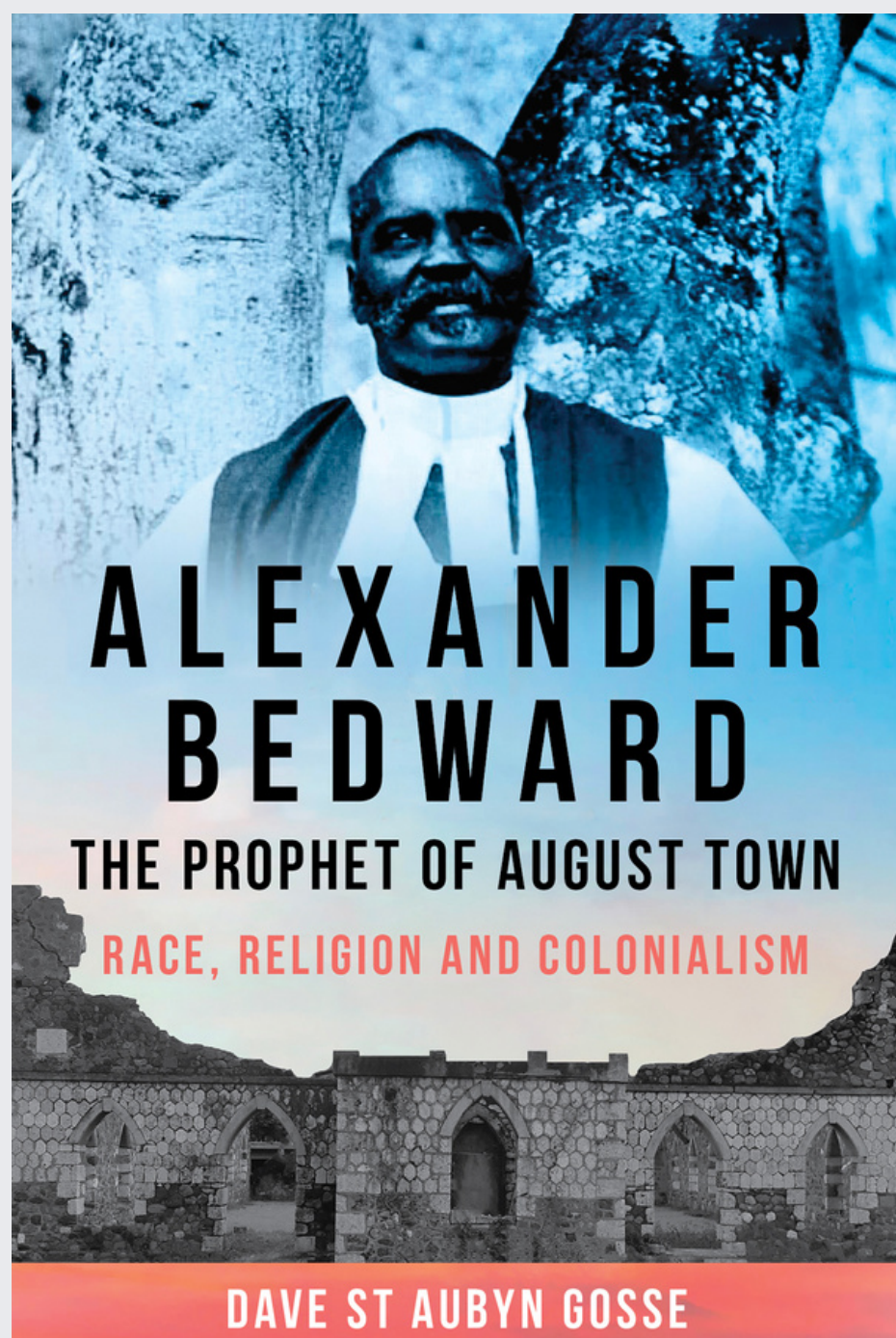




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NEW RELEASE



Laughter is the natural response of most Jamaicans to the name Alexander Bedward, long proclaimed as the lunatic who literally attempted to fly to heaven. In *Alexander Bedward, the Prophet of August Town: Race, Religion and Colonialism*, Dave St Aubyn Gosse debunks this common image of Bedward by drawing on new sources to help cast Bedward in a more positive light. Gosse argues that Bedward ought to be recognized as one of the significant black nationalists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Bedwardism was a highly organized movement, especially among the working class in the early 1900s. Bedward's Jamaica Native Baptist Church was located in almost every parish of Jamaica and had numerous chapters abroad. He affirmed Africa, its culture and traditions, and he laid the foundation for later black nationalist movements such as Garveyism and Rastafari, and he brought Revivalism to national prominence. Bedward challenged the colonial order and those who attempted to "save" black Jamaicans from the backwardness of African traditions, and in the process, he became a hero to the masses.

Many of Jamaica's colonial laws – most notably the lunacy and vagrancy acts – were devised to stifle all expressions of African folk culture and were instituted as a response to Bedwardism. Colonial governments used these laws to effectively silence their Afro-Jamaican critics and distort the historical record. Gosse's work offers a necessary corrective to that record.

DAVE ST. AUBYN GOSSE is a senior lecturer and director, at the Institute of Caribbean Studies, the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica. He is the author of *Abolition and Plantation Management in Jamaica, 1807-1838*.

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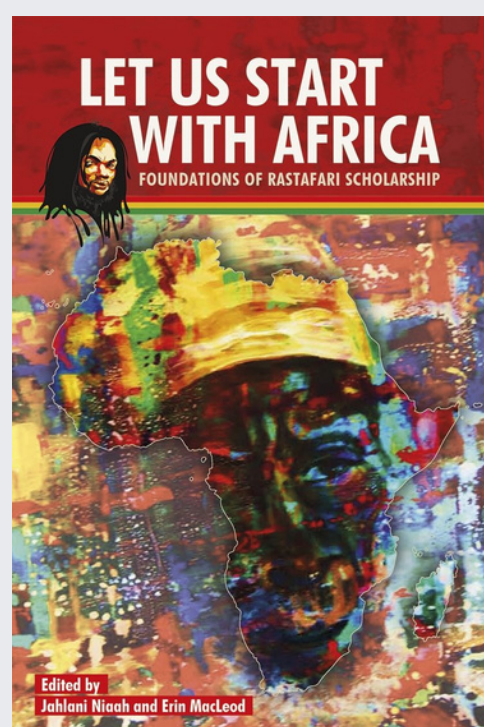
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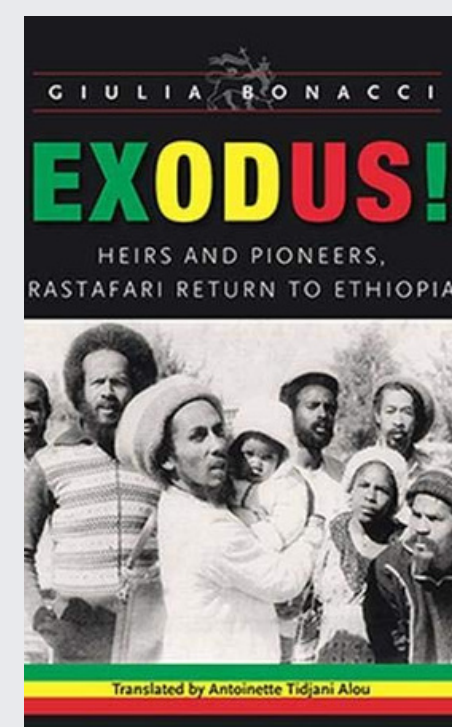
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