CHAPTER TWO

'To do something for the race': Harold Moody and the League of Coloured Peoples

David Killingray

In the century following 1850 the West Indies produced a steady flow of West Indian intellectuals, predominantly men, who either spent short spells of time in Europe and North America or who lived outside the Caribbean for a good part of their lives. A significant early figure was Edward W. Blyden;[1] in the twentieth century there were Marcus Garvey, George Padmore, C. L. R. James, Eric Williams and the Nobel prizewinner, W. Arthur Lewis.[2] But there are many more less well-known figures who contributed to the intellectual life of the Caribbean consistently to challenge prevailing views of race and empire: J. J. Thomas whose brief book *Froudacity* criticised the prejudices of the eminent English historian James Froude; Samuel Jules Celestine Edwards from Dominica, dead at an early age while editing *Lux*, the London journal of the Christian Evidence Society;[3] that sharp critic of politics and imperial racism, the Jamaican doctor Theophilus Scholes; Henry Sylvester Williams who organised the first Pan-African Congress in London in 1900; and the medical doctors John Alcindor, James Jackson Brown and Harold Moody, all of whom had practices in London in the early part of the twentieth century.

Harold Moody is in many ways an underrated figure.[4] Recently published accounts of Pan-Africanism and black political activity in Britain pay some attention to Moody and the League of Coloured Peoples which he founded in 1931, but the tendency is to give pride of place to radicals such as Padmore and James.[5] Moody's Christian, calculated and cautious agenda in combating what was known in the first half of the twentieth century as the colour bar, was often seen by black radical activists to have been Fabian and too conservative. Indeed, the Communist paper, *The Negro Worker*, in 1933 attacked Moody with that misused label, an 'Uncle Tom'.[6] However, distaste for Moody and his methods did not prevent some radicals from seeking the company, charity, comfort, cash and contacts which his home and the League

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afforded them. Moody was also prepared on occasions to work with them 'for the sake of the race'. While leftist radicals in the 1930s talked in terms of kicking down the doors of authority, Moody's policy was to knock politely, wait to be admitted, and then to argue for wrongs to be righted. As a result Moody was invited in to government and private offices, listened to by people in positions of influence and, although they might often disparage his activities, his persistence in lobbying did yield some results as he challenged the prevailing policies and practices of racial discrimination in Britain and the colonial empire.

Moody's formative years

Harold Moody was born in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1882, the son of a pharmacist, although the most enduring influence on his development as a young man was clearly his mother who had little formal education but was a very forceful presence. Moody's childhood home was loving and secure; he was encouraged to study and as a serious-minded boy he did well at school, although not quite well enough (and here colour may have been a factor in that race-conscious colony) to secure a prized 'island scholarship'. Nevertheless, in 1904 he sailed for Britain to study medicine at King's College London.

After completing his studies, Moody married in 1913 a white English woman, Olive Tranter, a nurse whom he met while working on the wards of the Royal Eye Hospital in London. Rejected for a hospital post at King's College Hospital because of his colour, he set up a medical practice in Peckham, south London, where he remained for the rest of his life. He returned to Jamaica on only three occasions, in 1912, 1919 and 1946–47. He made his life in London, convinced that this was the place where he should be, initially to help one of his younger brothers through university,[7] but also in order to combat racial prejudice. Increasingly in demand as a preacher Moody used the pulpit to proclaim to predominantly white congregations the Christian message of a colour-blind society, which he believed essential if the British empire were to survive. By the late 1920s Moody realised that the ingrained racial prejudice that he continued to experience in Britain needed to be opposed by more systematic action and better directed pressure. In 1931, with the support of Quakers, he founded the League of Coloured Peoples (LCP), a multi-racial lobby which began to campaign for full civil rights for black people in Britain, and which came increasingly to condemn white racial superiority in the empire overseas. As preacher, lobbyist and campaigner Moody drove himself hard. In the spring of 1947 he returned home from a strenuous tour of the West Indies and died twelve days later at the age of sixty-four.

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Harold Moody certainly thought of himself as an intellectual. In the context of his considerable achievements, coming from an island with a high level of non-literacy and low level of formal education, that was an easy assumption for a man with advanced medical qualifications – he gained an MD in 1919 – who read widely and intelligently on theology, history, contemporary politics and economics, and who also spoke and wrote words that were widely promoted and reported. Moody's intellectual capacities enabled him to set the racial problems that he encountered in their historical context; but he was also practically minded in actively seeking strategies to deal with racial prejudice. He firmly believed that intellect was God-given; that the mind had to be used to its full extent and particularly for human good; and, as a black Jamaican, that included striving for the 'good of the race'. But there was probably another element. Moody came from the 'brown middle class' in a colonial society that was highly conscious of race, and that undoubtedly drove him to prove his intellectual worth before white people. Jamaicans who had received a higher education, Moody believed, had clear responsibilities. Writing in 1932 he argued that Jamaicans should not seek to emulate the 'manner(s), behaviour and bearing' of white people and to be 'ashamed of his own colour and his own heritage'. 'Herein, to my mind', he wrote, 'lies the main reason why so few intellectual Jamaicans do anything actively to help on their own race. We are not proud of it. We do not belong to it. We want to pass into the ranks of our white rulers.' Moody included himself within this educated class and urged that we 'identify ourselves with the masses and make their inaudible cry our own', and not to abandon Jamaica in order 'to find a better livelihood either in America, Canada or Britain'.[8]

Moody published relatively little: a few pamphlets, regular contributions to the LCP journal *The Keys* and to its wartime successor *News Letter*, as well as several manuscripts including an unpublished book entitled *Race Problems*.[9] At the same time there were his many sermons and addresses delivered to congregations and audiences up and down the country and often reported, sometimes verbatim, in provincial newspapers and in the Christian press and magazines. Much of what he said and wrote had a similar message. Occasionally Moody's talks were broadcast by the BBC, including wartime talks to the West Indies. In addition there are his numerous campaigning letters to government departments and individuals. In his surviving papers there exists the interleaved Bible, which he received as a prize at King's College, his many annotations providing further insight into his intellectual development, particularly into his theological and political ideas.[10]

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In this chapter I will examine two matters: first, the influences that shaped Harold Moody's thinking and behaviour; and second, how those beliefs were applied throughout his active life in countering racial prejudice and promoting the interests of black peoples.

Moody's formative years and early education in late nineteenth-century colonial Jamaica exposed him to the pernicious influences of a social order based on colour discrimination, and gave shape to his later ideas and perceptions of a colour-blind society based solely on merit. Jamaica's social structure was largely determined by a hierarchy of colour, a pigmentocracy; people with lighter coloured skins – brown Jamaicans – headed the social and economic order while those with darker skins were mainly at the bottom. Moody was black although his father was brown and his paternal grandfather white. As a child Moody's mother, although dark in complexion, urged her son to find companions amongst those who were lighter in colour, believing this to be the way for his social advance.

The educational system in Jamaica encouraged all Jamaicans, regardless of social origin or complexion, to think of themselves as British. The curriculum in the primary schools, and particularly so in the few secondary schools, was anglocentric, functioning as a principal means by which the ideals of the British way were projected into the colony. At Wolmer's Free School, a mixed-race secondary school in Kingston, Jamaica, Moody's mind was shaped by ideas from British books and white teachers, a fare very similar to that offered to schoolboys thousands of miles away in Kingston, England. In his early years in London as a medical student Moody recalled that he 'sought to become as much English as I could and to discard everything Jamaican'. This was associated with a deep antipathy to any idea of an African origin, as he recollected towards the end of his life:

> I had been educated away from my heritage and towards the country which I had learnt to call 'home'. My desire then was to have as little as possible to do with my own people and upon Africans I looked down as a species too low in the rank of human development for me in any way to associate with. I was black indeed but I was not African, nor was I in any way related to Africa. To what family of man I belonged I really did not know. At heart I really believed I was English.[11]

Moody only began to take pride in his Jamaican and African heritage after many years' experience of encountering racial antipathy in Britain. It was a gradual realisation that black people, whether from the Caribbean or from Africa, had a common identity and experience shaped by slavery and colonial subjugation. In 1927, addressing a missionary meeting on Africa at the City Temple, in London, Moody spoke

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firmly of his 'pride as I contemplate the pit from which I was dug, and feel overwhelmed with satisfaction to belong to a race which has its whole future yet to achieve'.[12] Twenty years later, on his last visit to Jamaica, he declared: 'I have never been more a Jamaican than I am today. I believe in Jamaica … As a son of the soil, I want to do, what I believe is the desire of every true Jamaican, everything in my power to further the very best interests of the land of my birth.'[13] Moody's path to recognising his black and African-descended identity was a slow one, but it was firmly forged by his struggle in confronting British racism.

Moody's Christian faith

The most decisive influence in Moody's life was his conversion to Christianity as a teenager in the late 1890s. Thereafter reading the Bible, prayer and the practice of a Christian life underpinned his life. He did little that was not accompanied by lengthy prayer and this often gave him a conviction that he was about God's purposes, arising out of his belief in a God who was holy, righteous and active in a world corrupted by sin.[14] Moody's faith was the mainspring of his life. If C. L. R. James's values stemmed from the ethos of the public school and the manners of the cricket field, then Moody certainly could recognise the influence of the former. However, much more enduring for him was the moral and spiritual teaching of his home and that which he received from the North Street Congregational Church and the Christian Endeavour branch in Kingston.[15]

Congregationalism combined a thoughtful, critical Biblicalism with a social agenda which appealed to the serious and scholarly-minded Moody. Many Congregationalists, including Moody, had a high view of the Bible but not one that shunned critical hermeneutics. Before he left Jamaica he had read Ernest Renan's de-deifying *Life of Jesus*. He was also familiar with Darwinian evolutionary ideas, confiding in his Bible that the critical question was not 'how' creation happened but that God's hand was behind it. As a young medical student he seems to have thought of offering himself as a medical missionary in Africa, and thereafter he retained a deep and active involvement in the work of the London Missionary Society, becoming chairman in 1943. When he arrived in London, Moody immediately attached himself to a Congregational church, and from then on he was active in the Congregational Union, both locally and nationally, as a Sunday school teacher, deacon and lay preacher. In the mid 1940s his name was on the list of those under consideration as a future chairman of the Congregational Union. He continued to be associated with Christian Endeavour, becoming London, and then national, president of the Union in the 1930s. Another movement with which he was always

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pleased to be associated was the Christian Brotherhood, a largely nonconformist organisation that flourished during the Edwardian years offering working men the Gospel and social improvement.[16]

Christian doctrine underwrote Moody's ideas of humanity and race. In a pamphlet addressed to young members of Christian Endeavour, he said:

> Christ came to help me to realise that in spite of all my failings I was worth dying for; as one of His followers, I must impact to each man, no matter how degraded he may be at the moment, a consciousness of the fact that he was created in the image of God, and that it is possible for him to rise into that likeness, and recognise that 'I too am a man'.[17]

A text much used by Moody in his sermons was the Apostle Paul's revolutionary statement to the Judaeo-Greek Christian church in Galatia: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus'.[18] In calculatedly preaching from such texts, Moody challenged his mainly white congregations to practise their Christian lives in a way that ran directly counter to the endemic racial prejudice in British society, and from which active Christians were not exempt. All people were equal in God's sight and the colour bar, whether practised in Britain or in the empire, was contrary 'to the principles and teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, who used every possible opportunity to put the so-called despised and outcast in the best possible light', the Samaritan, the Roman, the Greek and Syrophoenician, gentiles, white and black, Christ had died for all without exception.[19] In the1930s, at a time when fascism and Communism appealed to corporate identity, Moody stressed Christianity's emphasis on individual worth, arguing that Jesus Christ had said 'the very hairs on your head are numbered', and more pointedly, Moody claimed, that 'Every one is a child for whom Christ died'.[20]

Christian redemption was for all without exception. But this was personal salvation by which individual lives were transformed by Christ's saving grace. Integral to the spiritual challenge was the conviction that people of different races and cultures should genuinely love and accept one another without distinction. Moody did not think that collective social attitudes could be changed or engineered in the short term. His social and political agenda was evolutionary not revolutionary. Faced with widespread British ignorance and race prejudice which extended from the Cabinet table to the slum bar, Moody knew that to counter this would take generations. The process of educating white British people, of changing social and cultural attitudes would require, he concluded, the force of legislative intervention. On the other hand,

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in the short term it might be possible to bring about change in official attitudes and policies by direct pressure on Whitehall. In this dual process of persuasion and pressure, Moody enlisted the help of white people of influence. At the same time he firmly believed that black people had an important role to play: they had to demonstrate their worth and to combine with progressive interests, including white people, to advance the interests of black civil rights. Thus Moody had a high regard for Booker T. Washington's achievements in the United States although he was not uncritical of his policies.[21] In Moody's assessment Christian piety, hard work, merit and commitment to the cause were qualities he prized most highly.

Moody was a great publicist, seeking opportunities wherever he could to speak against the colour bar, using the pulpits and platforms offered by his own Congregational Union and those of other nonconformists, the Brotherhood Movement and the Quakers, Anglican churches and cathedrals, and secular organisations such as the Colonial Institute, and Save the Children Fund. He was probably most comfortable in a pulpit where preachers were above contradiction. There is no evidence that he spoke on the stump or out of doors, though he had probably done so as a teenager in Jamaica and while a student at King's College during a rural mission in Bedfordshire. He liked to have his life ordered; he was no tub-thumper or populist although no doubt he would have coped well if Speakers' Corner had been the only platform available. In any case, he was a busy man with a large medical practice and a growing family of six children. Although his income was considerable, in excess of £3,000 in 1938, so was his expenditure, not least on the private schooling and university fees for his children, while he gave generously to finance the League of Coloured Peoples.

He preached most Sundays throughout his life, sometimes several times a weekend, invariably proclaiming a Christian message of salvation but also social inclusiveness and racial harmony. As a physically large man he had a forceful presence on a platform; his sermons and speeches, usually Biblically based, were presented in an authoritative voice; they were well structured, spiced with vivid illustrations and contemporary evidence. Political comment was not ignored. He was a popular and much sought after speaker; being black may indeed have lent weight to that appeal, but Moody rarely allowed condescension to keep him from a chance to speak out. Racial prejudice he commonly referred to as 'a mental and spiritual disease which has taken a heavy toll of human happiness'.[22] More forcefully he denounced it as a product of fear, a sin of pride. In so doing he did not exempt black people from the charge, stating that it was 'a common sin of all peoples throughout history'.[23]

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He frequently drew on his scientific knowledge to discount popular ideas of racial hierarchies: 'Scientifically all men are equal', he often proclaimed, drawing support from another favourite text from a Pauline sermon that 'God hath made of one blood all nations of men'.[24] Speaking in Wolverhampton in October 1929 he declared that Africa was the cradle of humanity and that 'examined scientifically, anatomically, or physiologically, there is nothing in the organic make-up of coloured people that implies inferiority'.[25] He also employed medical metaphors to illustrate the effects of racial prejudice, which he frequently described as 'an infection in the blood stream' or a virus infecting society.

Temperance, the welfare of children and pacifism were other causes that Moody embraced. He eschewed alcohol and tobacco, devoted some of his energies to the Save the Children Fund, and spoke out against war and armaments. The Great War convinced him that war was immoral and un-Christian, but those convictions may have been in his mind before 1914.[26] Nevertheless, for the rest of his life he was a pacifist. However, the outbreak of war in 1939 – the LCP had long denounced the racial policies of Nazi Germany – taxed his convictions. Before the outbreak of the war, Moody and the LCP lent weight to the campaign to amend King's Regulations which stated that commissions could only be granted to those of 'pure European parentage'. In 1941 Moody's son, Arundel, received an army commission as did several of his other children during the war years. The lucrative business of munitions manufacturers, 'those terrible Pharaohs', earned Moody's ire as did the compromise and passivity of the churches with their 'desultory prayers' as they embraced nationalism and denied 'Christ the Prince of Peace'. War was slavery, Moody argued as he praised the Oxford students in the spring of 1933 for 'refusing to fight "for King and Country"', and appealed 'for an anti-war pact by the churches'.[27]

Racial prejudice in Britain

From the moment that Harold Moody landed in Avonmouth in the autumn of 1904 he ran into racial prejudice expressed both overtly and in various subtle forms. The black population of Britain then may have numbered 10,000, mainly concentrated in port cities, with a small number of black people, some occupying professional positions, scattered throughout the country.[28] As a black student seeking lodgings in London Moody was rebuffed on several occasions. Black people were often stared at by people in the street; rude and curious street children shouted catcalls. Non-Europeans, especially Africans, were displayed on the stage or in 'tribal villages' at international exhibitions. Few Britons

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were well informed enough to distinguish between people from Africa and those who came from the Caribbean. Moody's spoken English was frequently marvelled at by those who patronisingly invited him to tea; even in later life provincial newspaper reports complimented him on his fluency in the language.[29] Even some of his friends within the Christian Union at King's College proved to be jealous of his achievements and sought to slight him because of his colour. When he complained of racial prejudice he was told that he had a 'chip on his shoulder'.

One aspect of race prejudice that Moody lived with, and which he often argued against, was over what were called 'mixed marriages' and the children produced from those relationships. Moody was himself the product of parents and grandparents of different colours. When he planned to marry Olive Tranter in 1912 her family objected, but so did his parents in Jamaica: 'the only painful letter which I had from my beloved Mother, was the one in reply to the information I gave her of my proposed marriage'.[30] A friend of the couple told Olive that by marrying a black man she was letting down the white race; acquaintances, and even strangers, openly told them that children from such a marriage would result in social degeneracy. It is hardly surprising that Moody spoke and wrote often on the question of inter-racial marriage and that he took a pride in the educational progress of his children, most of whom entered the professions. As a new, well-qualified doctor, he was denied a hospital post at King's because a matron would not have a black man on her wards. Several years later, when his medical practice was well established in south London, the Camberwell Guardians rejected Moody's application to serve as a poor law doctor on the grounds that the poor 'would not have a nigger to attend them'.[31]

His expanding medical practice, his growing number of preaching engagements, and the respectable position that he occupied, meant that during and after the first world war a stream of black nurses and students came to his Peckham door in search of his support after they had been refused positions promised at hospitals. Other men who came to his house during the war were graduates and professionals refused military commissions, some even being rejected at recruiting stations as they sought to enlist in the ranks. Critics of the LCP condemned Moody for being only concerned with the interests and welfare of middle-class people. It is true that in the early years he had much more to do with black professionals. However, the LCP campaigned for the rights of black British seamen who were put on the aliens' register, and took up the cause of working-class black people who fell foul of racial abuse. A glance through the pages of Moody's visitors' book for the 1940s shows a steady stream of black people of all social backgrounds visiting and staying at 164 Queen's Road in

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Peckham.[32] Moody welcomed them as he did elite figures, because he was doing 'something for the race'.

The Lobbyist

Racial prejudice was if anything more pronounced in the two decades following the first world war. There were more black people in Britain than before and the earlier curiosity and submerged spirit of tolerance had been slowly overtaken by a harsher perception of non-Europeans. For all his efforts preaching and speaking against the colour bar – and Moody probably addressed many more white people on this issue than did any one else from the 1920s until his death in 1947 – it was a Sisyphean struggle. Perhaps most hurtful to Moody was the lack of sympathetic understanding of his cause from his close associates in the London Missionary Society on whose councils he sat. Middle-class whites knew nothing of the slights and rebuffs that their confident black colleague and fellow Christian had experienced. Even less could they envisage what it was like to be a black person in a sea of white hostility and indifference: a black skin meant for many that employment was refused, doors to accommodation slammed shut, entry to hotels, restaurants and public houses denied, and those who married across the colour line ran the risk of obloquy. When the distinguished actor Paul Robeson was refused service at the Savoy Grill in London in autumn 1929, the insult was reported in the press as a scandal.[33] Many black people suffered similar and worse rebuffs on a daily basis and yet their injuries went unheard and unreported.

Moody did not think that the pulpit and the sermon had to be abandoned but by the late 1920s he did come to recognise that a parallel strategy was needed. This would still have a Christian focus but would go outside the churches in order to cultivate secular forces that could help apply added pressure in combating racial prejudice. Moody appears not to have joined any of the small and often short-lived black pressure groups that had been created in Britain, mainly by students and professionals, in the period after 1918. He does not figure in the meetings of bodies such as the African Progress Union and the Society of Peoples of African Origin. He cannot have been unaware of their existence and indeed he must have known of the Committee for the Welfare of Africans in Europe, established in 1919, which had close links with the Student Christian Movement and with which the Rev. John Harris was closely involved.[34] That kind of organisation was one to which Moody would have been sympathetically inclined. His non-involvement was probably due to his heavy commitments as doctor, family man and preacher. At the same time he had his own agenda and circuit. However,

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in December 1927 Moody did speak at the London service of the Union of Students of African Descent (USAD), a group which had grown out of the London-based and apolitical West African and West Indian Christian Union. His address contained references to African nationalism and self-determination for Africa and, inevitably, to the race situation in Britain, concluding with the critical prayer that 'the British people will do their utmost to repair the past – oh, God, give us grace'.[35]

By the mid 1920s the USAD was acting as a political pressure group on questions of racial discrimination, stimulated by the Nigerian law student Lapido Solanke who, in 1925, was a founder member of the West African Students Union (WASU).[36] Moody knew Solanke, for later the LCP was to clash with the WASU over the question of control of Aggrey House, a student hostel in London. By the late 1920s Moody was in his mid-forties, far removed from student politics and the world in which those affairs were conducted. He was also a West Indian whereas most of the leading lights in these black organisations and political groups were from West Africa. Geographical origins made for personal and territorial disputes, while some West Indians were not averse to looking down on Africans.

The League of Coloured Peoples

By late 1929 an increased number of reports in the national press of instances of the 'colour bar occurring … in certain hotels' stimulated a group of Quakers, led by John Fletcher and members of various missionary bodies, along with representatives of the Labour and Liberal parties, to convene a series of meetings at Friends House in order to discuss how to combat the colour bar. Moody was among those who attended along with James Marley, Labour MP for North St Pancras, the feminist novelist Winifred Holtby and C. P. Scott, editor of the *Manchester Guardian*. The result was the creation in January 1931 of the Joint Council to promote Understanding between White and Coloured People in Great Britain, which had as its principal aim 'to overcome colour prejudice in this country'.[37] Sir Francis Younghusband was the chairman, Moody the vice-chairman; other members included Vera Brittain, Professor C. G. Seligman and Lancelot Hogben.[38]

The day before the Joint Council was inaugurated, Moody had attended a meeting of the Missionary Council which had set up a Sub-Committee on Africans in England. The sub-committee reported in March 1931 and suggested the need for 'one union' of all coloured people to deal with problems of the colour bar and to help black people adjust to life in Britain.[39] Moody had eyes on leading that 'one union' and in this idea he appears to have been encouraged by Dr Charles Wesley, an

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African-American professor of history at Howard University, active in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP), who was visiting Britain as a Guggenheim Fellow. A preliminary meeting, 'attended principally by coloured students from the Colonies', was held in the Central London YMCA in March 1931.[40] Moody clearly had in mind a body on the lines of the NAACP, an organisation big enough 'which would capture the imagination of the black and white peoples'.[41] In June of that year, at a meeting called by Moody in the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, London, attended by a mixed race audience including Paul Robeson and Ellen Wilkinson MP, the League of Coloured Peoples was inaugurated.[42]

Although the LCP was a multi-racial body, Moody's intention was that it should be led solely by black people. Race was clearly a central motif of the League and from the outset Moody proclaimed his Pan-African credentials. According to his biographer Moody decided to found another organisation because:

> The Christian Church had many tasks and could not leave all the others to concentrate on this one. Missionary Societies were intimately concerned with this question and it had a real bearing on their work, but it was not the reason for their existence. The same was true of all other sympathetic organisations and societies.[43]

Besides promoting the interests of its members, the other major objects of the LCP were 'to interest members in the welfare of coloured peoples in all parts of the world' and 'to improve relations between the races'. The LCP was the first black-led organisation to give effective voice to West Indians and West Africans living in Britain. It was dominated by Moody, with key positions at times occupied by members of his family, and largely sustained by subscriptions which he solicited from supportive church groups supplemented by his own money. The paid-up membership of the League never rose above a few hundred and *The Keys*, its journal, had a similarly small circulation; expenditure invariably outstripped income. The LCP executive was mainly West Indian with some Africans and an occasional Asian member. Prominent roles were played by the cricketer Learie Constantine, W. Arthur Lewis, and later Hugh Springer. Paul Robeson lent his support to early LCP activities, although as the 1930s progressed his sympathies increasingly lay with the more radical James–Padmore grouping. Over the next fifteen years, until Moody's death, the League lobbied, campaigned and protested to change the domestic scene of race relations; its remit also extended to colonial issues, and to any other matter, such as that of the Scottsboro Boys, where race was a central issue. However, on the latter cause Moody was characteristically careful in his selection of his allies.[44]

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Moody regarded the LCP as a Christian organisation. This is clear from the regular church services held in the name of the LCP, the Christian language in the early issues of the League's journal, *The Keys*, and the prayers written in Moody's Bible in which he sought the Almighty's help in conducting League affairs. The League's multi-racial focus was indicated by the title given to its journal which Moody took from Aggrey's aphorism that musical harmony was only possible when the black and white keys of the piano were played together.[45] Nevertheless, *The Keys*, first published in spring 1933, constantly stressed black achievement. In its early years the LCP acted more as a social welfare society, holding meetings, arranging sporting activities, and helping to arrange summer outings in the country for poor black children from the capital. Many West Indian and West African students were active members of the LCP – W. Arthur Lewis, for example, the future Nobel prizewinner – but its racial embrace also included C. L. R. James who spoke at an early conference and contributed to *The Keys*.[46] Moody successfully recruited white elite support for the League: Margery Perham, Professor Malinowski, and Lord Lugard were all associated,[47] while colonial governors and academics were invited to address League meetings. This helped promote the LCP's image of reasoned seriousness while also identifying, even if only by name, influential people whose support could be claimed in the cause of race relations.

The League was energetic in confronting the colour bar. Much of the energy came from Moody himself. Racist language was challenged whether it was on the BBC, in parliament or in the press; letters were written to departments of state, and on major issues delegations lobbied the Colonial Office; and on less exalted matters – securing positions for black nurses, for example – the League was active. Common humanity was stressed by Moody although he often proclaimed the significant role of Africa in the history of the world and the names of 'really great Africans and persons of African descent', invariably men with whom he thought he could most easily identify such as the late nineteenth-century Tswana leader, Khama, Booker T. Washington and Aggrey. Moody once stated: 'I am proud of my British citizenship, but I am still more proud of my colour, and I do not want to feel that my colour is going to rob me of any of the privileges to which I am entitled as a British citizen'.[48] But inevitably this meant that black people had to prove themselves to white people, to demonstrate that they were worthy of respect which invariably required a polite passivity.

Moody was delighted the LCP secured the support of prominent, especially titled, women. Titles, after all, helped open doors. League administration relied heavily on women. This included Olive Moody, although probably she often resented the intrusions into family life

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of League activities, and Moody's elder daughter Christine, who for several years served as LCP secretary. Another active female member was Una Marson, the Jamaican poet and broadcaster, who on her arrival in Britain lodged with the Moodys in Peckham, as Alison Donnell describes in her chapter. The LCP offered a more sympathetic home for many black women than did the male-dominated WASU or the marxist bodies, with their often cold radical rigour.

Racial prejudice, Moody believed firmly, was partly cultivated by the use of pejorative language and by stereotypical images of black people in schools, books, the press and films. The LCP challenged both the media and schools. In 1944 it set up a committee to inquire into how questions of race were handled in English schools. The result was a pamphlet entitled *Race Relations and the School*, produced by a committee of six educationalists, including Kenneth Little, with a foreword provided by the historian G. P. Gooch.[49] This critically examined school textbooks, and went on to advocate radical changes in the elementary and secondary school curriculum, including the adoption of courses of world history and the study of Africa and Asia. Although well received by several academics the report made little impact on the educational world or the school curriculum.

There is not space here to detail the many busy activities of the LCP in the late 1930s and throughout the war years of 1939–45. The Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935–36 radicalised and gave a new political direction to black groups around the world. The League was similarly affected. It adopted a more robust vocabulary in condemning the racialism that pervaded the British empire. The labour unrest in the West Indies in the late 1930s gave new purpose to the LCP, particularly as it competed for the leadership of black opinion against the radical demands of the small militant black organisations led by George Padmore and Ras Makonnen. Probably the position of the LCP, astride the moderate middle ground, was never under serious threat. When war came in September 1939 the League found many new causes which helped to increase support: commissions in the armed forces for black people; the discriminatory policies of the US military and the position of black GIs; the working conditions of black immigrant labour; continued discrimination in housing and the workplace; and the future of illegitimate children of mixed race. The membership of the League grew to some 500 paid-up members and by 1943 the organisation was probably at the height of its influence. There was an active travelling secretary and organiser in John Carter, branches in London and Liverpool, a short-lived group in Freetown and one also in Georgetown, British Guiana.[50]

Before the invasion of Ethiopia, colonial affairs had occupied part of

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the League's time. Afterwards the interest heightened. In wartime it increased considerably and the term 'Herrenvolk' began to appear in Moody's writings when he referred to British colonial labour and land policies, especially in Kenya, central Africa and South Africa. In the late 1920s Moody had talked of empire as based on greed and exploitation.[51] Imperial rule, he argued, should be based on trusteeship; indirect rule needed to be extended; African education expanded with the use of vernacular languages; economic investment and development were vital; and there needed to be a colour-blind empire with Africans promoted to positions of authority and trust. For the West Indies, the LCP urged federation, self-government, a university, and insisted that generations of economic neglect be drastically reversed by a programme of social development. Despite his often pessimistic language about colonial rule, Moody did not oppose the empire, even in the late 1930s; indeed, he thought that it could be a great force for good, but only if it were rapidly reformed. Failure to do that, he believed, would lead to its collapse. However, the slowness of colonial change modified Moody's thinking, and by the middle of the war he was arguing that 'the whole idea [of empire] is now out of date and in some senses immoral. There is no moral difference between one man possessing another and one nation possessing another.'[52]

The more radical tone of the LCP was given voice in 1943 when 'A Charter for Colonial Freedom' was discussed at the annual conference held in Liverpool and attended by over 500 people.[53] A year later, the eighth annual conference of the League adopted a 'Charter for Coloured Peoples', urging on 'the Governments of the United Nations' legislative measures to end racial discrimination and proposing 'that the indigenous peoples of all dependent territories shall have immediately a majority on all law-making bodies, and shall be granted full self-government at the earliest possible opportunity'.[54] By the autumn of 1944 Moody was in touch with W. E. B. DuBois of the NAACP, Amy Jacques Garvey and others, to plan a fifth Pan-African Congress. Moody had suggested such a congress in 1938 although he thought it should take place in Africa. What he now sought was to realise 'the force of a united front and with the help of God to remove the present world outlook whereby we all have been treated as pawns in the European game'. Moody told DuBois that he looked forward to a 'United Africa … to achieve the full emancipation of our peoples'.[55]

Any ambitions that Moody and the LCP had for a Pan-African congress was lost to the newly formed Pan-African Federation, led by Padmore and Makonnen. Their initiative and energies led to the Pan-African Congress meeting in Manchester in October 1945. Moody did not attend and there was only a token LCP presence. This was probably

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because he had grown increasingly suspicious of what he called 'Labour Groups', and, as he told DuBois, 'I do not want to tie ourselves to any one group either politically or in any other way'.[56] It is not unreasonable to assume that Moody saw the proposed Congress in Manchester as just another talking shop where black radicals would revisit the ideas that the LCP had adopted in Liverpool in 1943 and 1944. So it was not a gathering in which Moody invested overmuch importance.

Though pressure of work during the war had forced Moody to surrender much of the day-to-day running of League business, he nevertheless jealously guarded the body that was largely his creation and over which he had presided for nearly fifteen years. Anxiety about the left also became more prominent in his thinking. He was worried that if racial discrimination were not urgently challenged in the colonies, then anticolonial passions would become enlisted by a militant, atheistic Communism. In addition to this need to guard the integrity of the LCP, there was another possible reason for Moody's absence from the Manchester Congress. By the middle of 1945 he had ambitions to build a Cultural Centre in London, which would also serve as the League's headquarters. The Centre would, he hoped, provide a place where black students and visitors to London could meet each other and also with white people, thus improving race relations. In late 1946 Moody and his wife set sail to the United States and the West Indies to raise money for the Centre. Moody saw this as a spiritual, not a political, cause. In a 'Prayer Call' to supporters in the churches he said: 'I go at the bidding of the King of Kings and to carry out his work'. Within a few days of his return from the West Indies Moody died. The Cultural Centre was never realised.

An assessment

Moody's formative years were in the late nineteenth century. He was influenced by a godly mother and one or two European clergymen whose lives and behaviour provided models, not least in that they seemed not to show to him any sense of race distinction. Moody's Christian conversion was an enduring experience and one that was definitive in guiding his career, his marriage, his decision to remain in Britain, and eventually to form the LCP in 1931 and to lead it until his death. Energy, commitment and integrity, but also paternalism, marked the course which he plotted with a sharp intellect and pertinacity of purpose as he sought to 'do something for the Race'.

Moody was undoubtedly a visionary, to use Sam Morris's term.[57] The vision that he had was for a racially integrated and tolerant Britain where women and men, whatever their colour or creed, would be

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accepted and judged solely on merit. In turn a moral and righteous Britain would continue to possess a colonial empire but one marked by the forms of free association that existed between the white dominions. The old face of a race-ruled colonial empire would be transformed by representative institutions; trusteeship would be marked by impartial equity. This daydream, despite the language of democracy and representation, was elitist and little different from the discourse of many politicians in the African colonies. Moody, after all, was in the tradition of that hard-working, self-improving, Christian ethos which characterised the lives of men such as Booker T. Washington and James Aggrey. The LCP under his direction never lost what Drake has called its 'liberal-humanitarian' focus. Nevertheless, the LCP was carried forward on that surge of anti-colonial reaction following the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, and by the early 1940s it had adopted a more outspokenly radical programme for Britain's future race relations as well as for the colonial empire. But Moody's innate caution and conservatism meant that the LCP was left behind by the rapid pace of political change which led to the Manchester Congress.

What contribution did Moody and the LCP make to the West Indies and, more importantly to its major concern, that of improving race relations in Britain? The first question is the easiest to answer. The LCP was active in demanding a Royal Commission to inquire into social and welfare reforms in the West Indian islands, and from the late 1930s it served as a watchdog for Caribbean colonial interests at the heart of empire. The second question is more difficult to answer. From the late 1930s Moody argued for legislation to prevent racial discrimination. This was a radical idea rejected then and later by government as impractical. In those demands Moody was a generation or more ahead of his time. The LCP, along with other organisations, kept the question of race relations prominently before British politicians. Moody was an efficient lobbyist although less effective than he thought and sometimes claimed. Despite all the lobbying, by the time of his death race relations were little different from the situation which had prevailed ten or twenty years before.

The LCP had already lost its way by the time Moody, tired and worn out, died in 1947. The vision was still there but the will and the energy far less apparent. By 1945 the LCP had been outflanked by other groups, more radical in their demands. Although the LCP continued to function for a few years after Moody's death, led first by Learie Constantine, it became bogged down in internal disputes, slowly faltered and then folded. This was a tragedy for race relations in Britain: at a time when an increased number of West Indians were entering the country, the new immigrants were without a visionary leadership or politically

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acute black-led organisation to speak for their interests and to protest against escalating discrimination. Perhaps a figure such as Moody would not have been able to do this, but it was unfortunate that someone equal in his vision and stature was not then prominent.

Notes

1 Edward Wilmot Blyden, 1832–1912, born Danish West Indies; studied theology in the United States, emigrated to Liberia 1850 where he was active in politics; Liberian ambassador to London. He advocated the return of Black people to Africa and political unity and modernisation in West Africa. His best-known work is *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* (1887).

2 W. Arthur Lewis, 1913–91, born St Lucia; studied London School of Economics; editor of League of Coloured Peoples journal, *The Keys* 1935–36; taught at LSE 1938–47; author of *Labour in the West Indies* (1939); wartime civil servant in Board of Trade and Colonial Office; Stanley Jevons professor of political economy, University of Manchester 1948–58; consultant to Caribbean Commission 1949; economic adviser to prime minister of Ghana 1962–63; principal and then vice-chancellor, University of West Indies 1959–63; professor of public and international affairs, Princeton University 1963–68; author of many reports and books on economic development and politics; knighted 1963.

3 Celestine Edwards, 1865–94, born St Lucia; studied theology at King's College London; evangelical and temperance lecturer in Britain; editor of *Fraternity*, the monthly journal of the Society for the Recognition of the Brotherhood of Man.

4 There is a brief and uncritical biography by Moody's friend and pastor: David Vaughan, *Negro Victory: the life story of Dr Harold Moody* (London: Independent Press, 1950). An early study, which drew on the files of the then extant LCP files, was by the African-American sociologist St Clair Drake, 'Value system, social structure and race relations in the British Isles', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Chicago, 1954. Recent articles include two by Roderick J. Macdonald, 'Dr. Harold Arundel Moody and the League of Coloured Peoples, 1931–1947: a retrospective view', *Race*, 14:3 (1974); and the 'Introductory essay' to the reprint of *The Keys: the official organ of The League of Colored* [sic] *Peoples* (Millwood, NY: Kraus-Thomson, 1976). David Killingray, 'Race, faith and politics: Harold Moody and The League of Coloured Peoples', inaugural lecture, Goldsmiths College, University of London, 23 March 1999.

5 See Immanuel Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement* (London: Methuen, 1974); P. Olisanwuche Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism: the idea and the movement 1776–1963* (Washington DC.: Howard University Press, 1982); and also Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: the history of black people in Britain* (London: Pluto, 1984).

6 *The Negro Worker*, August–September 1933, p. 17.

7 Ludlow Moody, 1892–1987, studied at King's College Hospital, London (1913–18), and returned to Jamaica to become the government bacteriologist; his first wife was Vera, the sister of Norman Manley. Ronald Moody, 1900–84, Harold's third brother, studied dentistry at King's College London, practised for a few years, and then became a professional sculptor. He had exhibitions in Paris and became an influential figure in the Caribbean Arts Movement.

8 Certain personal papers (hereafter Moody papers) have been entrusted to me by Moody's five surviving children while I write his biography. Moody papers. Unpublished ms., 'Race Problem', chapter on 'Culture', c. mid 1932. The manuscript was rejected by Hodder and Stoughton.

9 Moody papers. This ms. was also entitled 'Some dangers of governing in the colonies', and developed from various of Moody's speeches and sermons in 1931–32, e.g. 'Some of the dangers besetting our colonial governments', address to the Threefold Movement tea conference, 14 December 1931.

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10 The interleaved Authorised Version of the Bible is in the possession of Garth Moody, Harold's youngest son.
11 Moody papers. 'The story of my life', ms. dd. early 1940s.
12 *Daily Gleaner* (Kingston), 12 November 1929, reporting address at LMS meeting, 22 October 1927.
13 Moody papers. Notes on visit to Jamaica, 1946–47.
14 Most of the studies that deal with Moody also mention his profound Christian belief, but they fail to develop this further. Vaughan, *Negro Victory*, predictably stresses Moody's Christian faith; see also David Killingray, 'Harold Moody and The League of Coloured Peoples: the Christian dimension', *Christianity and History Newsletter*, 11 (1993); and Killingray,'Race, faith and politics'.
15 The Christian Endeavour Society, formed in 1881, had Congregational origins but was a non-denominational organisation to promote the spiritual life of young people. It became an international Union in 1895, and by 1908 it had many societies around the world and an estimated membership of 3.5 million.
16 The Brotherhood Movement developed from the weekly meetings known as the 'Pleasant Sunday Afternoon'. Brotherhood members included a number of early labour leaders, and also several black Britons and African visitors to Britain. See A. E. H. Gregory, *Romance and Revolution: the story of the Brotherhood Movement* (Sevenoaks: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975).
17 Harold Moody, *Youth and Race* (London: Young Christian Booklets No. 5, Christian Endeavour Union, c. 1938–39), pp. 20–1.
18 Galatians 3: 28.
19 Harold Moody, *The Colour Bar* (London: St Luke's College, Mildmay Centre, 1944; second edition, 1945), pp. 19–20.
20 Moody, *Youth and Race*, p. 13.
21 Booker T. Washington, 1856–1915; born a slave, he advocated African-American progress and pioneered vocational schools, establishing the Tuskegee Industrial Institute in Alabama. He worked to improve race relations and also secretly financed legal challenges to the racially discriminatory Jim Crow laws.
22 Harold Moody, *Christianity and Race Relations* (London: League of Coloured Peoples and Fellowship of Reconciliation, n.d. c.1943), p. 16.
23 Moody, *The Colour Bar*, pp. 5–6.
24 Moody frequently used this text and the passage from Acts 17: 24–8 in sermons. See also his pamphlet *Race and Youth*, p. 5.
25 *Express & Star* (Wolverhampton), 14 October 1929.
26 Looking backwards and forwards in mid 1935, Moody combined pacifism and Pan-Africanism when he wrote: 'I would therefore call upon Africans throughout the world to decide that if Europe chooses to fight, we will on no account take up arms. United response to this call will mean that the 200,000,000 Africans in the world will save Europe, the world and humanity from the bloodiest disaster ever known', *The Keys*, 2:4 (April–June 1935), p. 67.
27 Sermon to Essex Congregational Union, Brightlingsea, reported in *Evening Star* (Ipswich), and the *East Anglian Daily Times*, 28 April 1933; *Essex County Standard*, 29 April 1933.
28 See Jeffrey Green, *Black Edwardians: black people in Britain 1901–1914* (London: Frank Cass, 1998).
29 For example, in a report headed, 'African Native Startles Assembly', it was stated that 'Speaking faultless English, Dr. Moody told the Assembly …', *Bulletin* (Glasgow), 5 May 1933.
30 Moody papers. Notes on 'Intermarriage', n.d. c.1934.
31 This is mentioned in a number of books and articles referring to Moody but so far I have not been able to find an original source.
32 Arundel Moody kindly photocopied the Visitor's Book for me. Unfortunately the volume covering the 1920s-1930s has not been found.
33 Martin Bauml Duberman, *Paul Robeson: a biography* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989), pp. 123–4.

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34 John Harris (1874–1940), former missionary in the Belgian Congo, who became secretary of the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society.
35 Reported in *West Africa*, 17 December 1927.
36 Hakim Adi, *West Africans in Britain 1900–1960: nationalism, Pan-Africanism and communism* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1998), pp. 23–39.
37 Friends House Archives, Euston Road, London. L051.7. See also *The Friend*, 6 December 1929, 10 January 1930, 1 May 1931, and *West Africa*, 2 May 1931.
38 Sir Francis Younghusband (1863–1942), formerly of the Indian Political Department; Vera Brittain (1896–1970), feminist author and pacifist; C. G. Seligman (1873–1940), the anthropologist; and Lancelot Hogben (1895–1975), the biologist and academic.
39 Drake, 'Value systems', p. 82, fn. 1. In the early 1950s, when Drake was carrying out research for his thesis, he was able to use the files of the LCP. Unfortunately the files cannot be located; they appear to have been destroyed or dispersed.
40 *The Times*, 16 March 1931.
41 Vaughan, *Negro Victory*, p. 54.
42 See *The West India Committee Circular*, 25 June 1931; *The Times*, 16 March 1931.
43 Vaughan, *Negro Victory*, p. 53.
44 The Scottsboro Boys were several young African-American men sentenced to death for supposedly raping a white woman in Alabama in 1931. In supporting the Scottsboro Boys defence campaign, Moody made it clear that he was backing the efforts of the NAACP and not supporting the Communist-led International Labor Defense organisation. Drake, 'Value systems', p. 98.
45 James Emman Kwegyir Aggrey (1875–1927), pioneer educationalist from the Gold Coast and vice-principal of Achimota College. See Edwin W. Smith, 'Aggrey of Africa', *The Keys*, 2:3 (January–March 1935), pp. 48–9.
46 James spoke at the League's first weekend conference, High Leigh, 24–26 March 1933, on the 'West Indian'; see *The Keys*, 1:1 (July 1933), p. 5. See James, 'West Indies self-government', *The Keys*, 1:4 (April–June 1934), pp. 73 and 84.
47 Lord Lugard (1858–1945), colonial pro-consul and major adviser to British government on colonial policy from 1921 until his death; Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942), the distinguished anthropologist; Margery Perham (1896–1982), the major student of British colonial administration.
48 Moody speaking to the Baptist Union, Glasgow, May 1933; see *Bulletin*, 5 May 1933.
49 The League of Coloured Peoples, *Race Relations and the Schools: a survey of the colour question in some aspects of English education with a number of proposals* (London: League of Coloured Peoples, n.d. c.1944).
50 Dr Hastings Banda, future dictator of Malawi, was the secretary of the Liverpool branch. Branches were claimed in other colonies, but Georgetown, British Guiana, was the only successful one, and by the late 1940s that had become a racist political organisation.
51 For example, at a meeting of the League of Nations Union, Kingswood, Bristol, 3 October 1928, as reported in *The Western Press*, 4 October 1928.
52 Moody, *The Colour Bar*, p. 23.
53 LCP *News Letter*, 43 (April 1943), pp. 4, 16–17. The *News Letter* was the wartime successor to *The Keys*.
54 LCP *News Letter*, 59 (August 1944), pp. 73, 86–8.
55 LCP *News Letter*, 59 (August 1944), p. 88.
56 Herbert Aptheker (ed.), *The Correspondence of W. E. B. DuBois: vol. II. Selections 1934–1944* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1976), pp. 66–7.
57 Sam Morris, 'Moody – the forgotten visionary', *New Community*, 1:3 (Spring 1972), pp. 193–6.

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