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Redeeming Santo Domingo: North Atlantic Missionaries and the Racial Conversion of a Nation

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Abstract

This article examines North Atlantic views of Protestant missions and race in the Dominican Republic between 1905 and 1911, a brief period of political stability in the years leading up to the U.S. Occupation (1916–1924). Although Protestant missions during this period remained small in scale on the Catholic island, the views of British and American missionaries evidence how international perceptions of Dominicans transformed in the early twentieth century. Thus, this article makes two key interventions within the literature on Caribbean race and religion. First, it shows how outsiders' ideas about the Dominican Republic's racial composition aimed to change the Dominican Republic from a "black" country into a racially ambiguous "Latin" one on the international stage. Second, in using North Atlantic missionaries' perspectives to track this shift, it argues that black-led Protestant congregations represented a possible alternative future that both elite Dominicans and white North Atlantic missionaries rejected.

Keywords: Caribbean; Dominican Republic; Protestantism; missionaries; race

"The Dominican Republic is not a *black* republic," British Wesleyan missionary Emerson Mears emphatically declared on March 30, 1905 in a letter to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in London.¹ His report starkly contrasted the observation that African American minister and future bishop Dr. Charles Spencer Smith of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church made almost a decade before. During his 1896 visit to eastern Hispaniola, Smith reminded his U.S. audience that "San Domingo is also a black man's Republic, which with Hayti and Liberia constitute the black republics of the world."² Mears, however, denied this common nineteenth century North Atlantic portrayal of the Spanish-speaking country. Describing racial tension between Dominicans and black migrants from other islands, Mears recommended that the

This paper was awarded the Sidney E. Mead Prize for the best unpublished article stemming from dissertation research that contributes significantly to its field and to the history of Christianity more broadly.

¹Emerson Mears, "Wesleyan Methodist Missions in the Dominican Republic—West Indies," 30 March 1905, Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, West Indies Correspondence (H-2707), microfiche 2062, Methodist Missionary Society Archives, London.

²C. S. Smith, "A Trip to the West Indies," *Christian Recorder*, 12 March 1896.

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British Wesleyan Methodist Church either cease its operation in the Dominican Republic or make a number of changes, including the creation of a European or high-class Dominican ministry trained by Englishmen since “the natives universally are used to, and expect a white ministry.” “Ignore this,” Mears warned, “and the result is termination and spiritual decadence.”³

Although diametrically opposed, Mears’s and Smith’s characterizations of the Caribbean nation that shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti demonstrate the salience of race in the minds of European and American missionaries at the turn of the twentieth century. White missionaries’ efforts to systematically instill racial divisions within missionary policy originated in the centuries-old fusion of racist ideology and Christian thought.⁴ Black Christians operating across the Protestant Atlantic world had challenged such distinctions, reinventing Christianity, since at least the late seventeenth century.⁵ For example, black British Caribbean clergy found racial solidarity as they traveled the Atlantic world to preach the Gospel; their speeches helped to animate the abolitionist movement of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁶ Similarly, at the turn of the eighteenth century, black people in the United States broke from white Methodist and Baptist denominations to form independent black churches where they could advocate for both free and enslaved blacks; after the U.S. Civil War (1861–1865), their advocacy grew increasingly international as black denominations sent Protestant missionaries to Hispaniola (Haiti and the Dominican Republic), the Anglophone Caribbean, and Africa in order to “uplift” the black race abroad.⁷ Thus, despite the similarities of whites’ and blacks’ Protestant chauvinism inherent in the missionary project, the distinct racial discourse between their missionary endeavors reflected fundamentally different orientations to racial capitalism and the history of the Atlantic slave trade. Race colored everything, and it fundamentally mattered to turn of the century Protestant missions in the Dominican Republic, a racially mixed Catholic nation founded in 1844 and situated at the crossroads of seismic world events and modern transformations.

Indeed, the history of Protestant missions in the Dominican Republic elucidates the tensions between traditional lines of Christian thought and radically different visions

³Mears, “Wesleyan Methodist Missions in the Dominican Republic.”

⁴The literature on the mutual constitution of race and Christian theology and praxis is expansive. See, for example, J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2010); Craig R. Prentiss, ed., *Religion and the Creation of Race and Ethnicity: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2003); Henry Goldschmidt and Elizabeth A. McAlister, eds., *Race, Nation, and Religion in the Americas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); and Kathryn Gin Lum and Paul Harvey, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Race in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁵Katharine Gerbner, *Christian Slavery: Conversion and Race in the Protestant Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 151, 154, 167–168. See also Jon F. Sensbach, *Rebecca’s Revival: Creating Black Christianity In the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005).

⁶John W. Catron, *Embracing Protestantism: Black Identities in the Atlantic World* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2016), 195–196; and Gerbner, *Christian Slavery*, 196.

⁷For African American missions in Africa and Haiti, see James T. Campbell, *Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Lawrence S. Little, *Disciples of Liberty: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the Age of Imperialism, 1884–1916* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000); Brandon R. Byrd, “Black Republicans, Black Republic: African-Americans, Haiti, and the Promise of Reconstruction,” *Slavery & Abolition* 36, no. 4 (October 2015): 545–567; and Brandon R. Byrd, *The Black Republic: African Americans and the Fate of Haiti* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 49–58.

of the future based on the black evangelical experience. The nineteenth century saw vast geopolitical, social, and economic upheaval across the Caribbean—the triumph of the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804), the abolition of slavery throughout the hemisphere, the decline of the Spanish Empire, and the rise of U.S. intervention after the Civil War—to paint in broad strokes. Such events incited regional and transnational debates over racial inclusion and black people’s citizenship rights in new post-emancipation states. While the substance of said debates did not always reduce to simple dichotomies, white supremacy thrived on oversimplification: white versus black, civilized versus heathen, and so on. Protestant missionaries to the Dominican Republic entered into these debates as both symptoms of the larger racist system and indicators of change. In their writings, missionaries both reflected the ideas of their period as well as imagined new missionary policies for the future. The fault lines between white missionaries’ and black missionaries’ perspectives reveal their distinct historical positions and hopes for possible alternative futures.

This article examines North Atlantic Protestant views of race in the Dominican Republic between 1905 and 1911, a brief period of political stability in the years leading up to the first U.S. Occupation of the Dominican Republic (1916–1924). Although Protestant missions during this period remained small in scale on the Catholic island, the views of British and American missionaries evidence how international perceptions of Dominicans transformed over time. Thus, this article makes two key interventions within the literature on race and religion in the post-emancipation circum-Caribbean. First, it shows how outsiders’ ideas about the Dominican Republic’s racial composition aimed to change the Dominican Republic from a “black” country to a racially ambiguous “Latin” one on the international stage. The few white missionaries who wrote about race in the Dominican Republic echoed arguments made by other white North Atlantic entities (politicians, tourists, military officials, and so on) operating in the country. Bringing a religious viewpoint into the conversation adds yet another layer to historical discussions regarding outsiders’ interpretations of Dominicans’ racial status that historians of the Caribbean have missed. Second, in using North Atlantic missionaries’ perspectives to track the shift, this article argues that black-led Protestant congregations represented a possible alternative future that both elite Dominicans and white North Atlantic missionaries rejected. Black missionaries, despite their Protestant chauvinism, countered racism by uniting people across languages and on the basis of race. The concerted effort among some white missionaries and Euro-Dominican elites to shift the international perception of the Dominican Republic away from blackness and toward a pan-Latin identity not only denoted a Europhile racist perspective but also represented the destruction of possible alternatives founded in the Afro-diasporic black experience.

I. The Dominican Republic on the International Stage

In recent years, the Dominican Republic has garnered international media attention for the 2013 court ruling that revoked citizenship from Dominicans of Haitian descent retroactively to the year 1929.⁸ Human rights activists and influential writers and scholars have decried the nation’s institutionalized anti-Haitian/anti-black racism and race denial.⁹ While Dominican activists have staged protests and continue to work for the rights of

⁸Given on September 23, 2013, the Tribunal Constitucional’s law, Sentencia 168-13, has denied birth-right citizenship to children born to undocumented migrants and has revoked citizenship from Dominicans of Haitian descent who were previously registered as citizens.

⁹For an assessment of international reaction, see: Samuel Martínez, “A Postcolonial Indemnity? New Premises for International Solidarity with Haitian-Dominican Rights,” *Iberamericana* 44, no.1–2 (April

Haitian-Dominicans, the opinions of foreigners—especially those from Europe and the United States—have mattered the most on the international stage.¹⁰

Indeed, North Atlantic perceptions of race relations in the Dominican Republic and Dominicans' racial status have always mattered for the country which exists alongside Haiti, a nation born out of revolution carried out by the enslaved. For nearly two decades after the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804), people living on the eastern side of the island remained under European rule while various Haitian leaders ruled in the west. Then, after a short-lived declaration of independence in 1821, the Dominican Republic became unified with Haiti for twenty-two years (1822–1844). During this period, the United States refused to recognize Haiti as a nation. When Dominicans gained independence in 1844, the same racist attitudes prevailed. The United States did not formally recognize Haiti until 1862. Dominican recognition came later, in 1866, after the country became annexed to Spain (1861–1865) and then regained independence in the War of Restoration (1863–1865).¹¹ When the United States attempted its own annexation of the Dominican Republic in the late 1860s, the bill was defeated on racial grounds.¹²

The racist attitudes that prevented the United States and European nations from interacting with the two nations on the island of Hispaniola on an equal basis persisted into the later decades of the nineteenth century. However, these attitudes affected the two nations in distinct ways. There is no mistaking Haiti and its revolution, a war that undermined a hegemonic Western world system of racial capitalism and consequently garnered the ire of Western nations.¹³ However, the same could not be said of the Dominican Republic. Throughout Dominican history, foreigners have often confused the Dominican Republic with Haiti or have ignored the historical and cultural distinctions between the two nations.¹⁴ Moreover, the fact that a majority of the Dominican population is of mixed European and African descent caused additional confusion for people accustomed to the British and American racial systems of hypodescent. Indeed, while some travelers recognized racial distinctions between Haitians and Dominicans, others, like Reverend Smith (quoted above), categorized both of the countries as “black republics.”¹⁵

2014): 173–193; and Hayden Carrón, “Borrando la huella africana: La sentencia 168-13 del Tribunal Constitucional Dominicano y la identidad nacional,” *Afro-Hispanic Review* 32, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 27–40.

¹⁰This reality has enabled the policy's proponents to claim that the country is being attacked by “foreign” powers: Martínez, “A Postcolonial Indemnity?,” 174.

¹¹William Javier Nelson, “U.S. Diplomatic Recognition of the Dominican Republic in the 19th Century: A Study in Racism,” *Afro-Hispanic Review* 10, no. 1 (January 1991): 10. For race relations during the Spanish Annexation and the War of Restoration, see Anne Eller, *We Dream Together: Dominican Independence, Haiti, and the Fight for Caribbean Freedom* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2016).

¹²Nicholas Guyatt, “America's Conservatory: Race, Reconstruction, and the Santo Domingo Debate” *Journal of American History* 97, no. 4 (March 2011): 976–1000.

¹³The literature on the Haitian Revolution, its racial politics, and its consequences is too vast to cite in full. For recent histories, I have turned to Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005); Marlene L. Daunt, *Tropics of Haiti: Race and the Literary History of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World, 1789–1865* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015); and Graham T. Nessler, *An Islandwide Struggle for Freedom: Revolution, Emancipation, and Reenslavement in Hispaniola 1789–1806* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

¹⁴Dixa Ramírez, *Colonial Phantoms: Belonging and Refusal in the Dominican Americas, from the 19th Century to the Present* (New York: New York University Press, 2018), 2–3.

¹⁵Only a year before Smith's visit, Isabel Miller of the Christian and Missionary Alliance reported: “Here the white blood predominates, though the inhabitants are of every shade of complexion.” Isabel Miller, “Santa Domingo,” *Christian Alliance Foreign Missionary Weekly*, 10 July 1895.

This “misrecognition” of the Dominican Republic inspired a concerted effort among elite Dominicans of European descent to discursively separate their country from Haiti in both racial and cultural terms.¹⁶ They did this by demonizing Haiti and linking Dominican national identity to the country’s Spanish heritage. As Dixia Ramírez has argued: “Dominican lettered nationalists forestalled full confrontations with being denied a seat at the global table by mythologizing Columbus and the early colonial past, as well as by consecrating the ideal of a white male patriot.”¹⁷ In the twentieth century, the *hispanophilia* and anti-black/anti-Haitian racism of nineteenth-century elites became institutionalized during the thirty-one-year dictatorship of Rafael L. Trujillo (1930–1961), during which Trujillo orchestrated the massacre of over 10,000 suspected Haitians at the Haiti-Dominican border in 1937. The anti-Haitian state-sponsored violence during the Trujillo era lives on in contemporary politics and especially in the 2013 decision that has retroactively revoked citizenship from Haitian-Dominicans.¹⁸ While the international community has denounced the Dominican Republic’s racist policies, it rarely recognizes its own hand in the historical making of Dominican racial attitudes.¹⁹

Scholarly literature, on the other hand, has condemned both anti-Haitianism and the essential role that North Atlantic powers have played in the making of Dominican racial politics. Since the 1970s, a new wave of scholars of Dominican history has critiqued traditional anti-Haitianism and has set out to document the country’s African legacy.²⁰ Additionally, various studies have tracked the transformations of foreigners’ views of Dominicans over time.²¹ Few works, however, have considered the opinions and goals of North Atlantic Protestant missionaries. There are two main

¹⁶The vast literature on Dominican racial ideology has critiqued anti-Haitian sentiment and the tendency to disassociate the country from Africa. Key works include: Roberto Cassá, “El Racismo en la ideología de la clase dominante dominicana,” *Ciencia* 3, no. 1 (January–March 1976): 61–85; Franklin Franco Pichardo, *Santo Domingo: Cultura, política e ideología* (Santo Domingo: Editora Nacional, 1979); Lauren Derby, “Haitians, Magic, and Money: Raza and Society in the Haitian-Dominican Borderlands, 1900 to 1937,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 36, no. 3 (1994): 488–526; Michiel Baud, “‘Constitutionally White’: The Forging of a National Identity in the Dominican Republic,” in *Ethnicity in the Caribbean: Essays in Honor of Harry Hoetink*, ed. Gert Oostindie (London: Macmillan Education, 1996), 121–151; Franklin Franco Pichardo, *Sobre racismo y antihaitianismo (y otros ensayos)* (Santo Domingo: Impresora Librería Vidal, 1997); Silvio Torres-Saillant, “The Tribulations of Blackness: Stages in Dominican Racial Identity,” *Latin American Perspectives* 25, no. 3 (May 1998): 126–146; Ernesto Sagás, *Race and Politics in the Dominican Republic* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000); David Howard, *Coloring the Nation: Race and Ethnicity in the Dominican Republic* (Oxford: Signal, 2001); Ginetta E. B. Candelario, *Black Behind the Ears: Dominican Racial Identity from Museums to Beauty Shops* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007); Silvio Torres-Saillant, “Blackness and Meaning in Studying Hispaniola: A Review Essay,” *Small Axe* 10, no. 1 (2006): 180–188, 232; Silvio Torres-Saillant, *Introduction to Dominican Blackness* (New York: CUNY Dominican Studies Institute, 2010); April J. Mayes, *The Mulatto Republic: Class, Race, and Dominican National Identity* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014); Lorgia García-Peña, *Borders of Dominicanidad: Race, Nation, and Archives of Contradiction* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2016); Milagros Ricourt, *The Dominican Racial Imaginary: Surveying the Landscape of Race and Nation in Hispaniola* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2016); and Ramírez, *Colonial Phantoms*.

¹⁷Ramírez, *Colonial Phantoms*, 220.

¹⁸Carrón, “Borrando la huella africana,” 29.

¹⁹García-Peña, *Borders of Dominicanidad*, 10.

²⁰Candelario, *Black Behind the Ears*, 91.

²¹For examples, see Candelario, *Black Behind the Ears*, 35–82. See also Bernardo Vega, *Los primeros turistas en Santo Domingo* (Santo Domingo: Editora Taller, 1991).

reasons for this lacuna. First, Protestant missions during the turn of the twentieth century were limited. Large-scale missionary activity did not take place until after the establishment of the American-backed ecumenical church, the Iglesia Evangélica Dominicana, in 1921. Second, it is commonly held that early Protestant churches only served black, Anglophone immigrants and migrants from other Caribbean countries who were already Protestant. However, as this article demonstrates, a few black ministers operating in the Dominican southeast did not limit themselves to the migrant population but ran bilingual congregations and schools during the first decade of the twentieth century. White North Atlantic missionaries, however, generally ignored this model of bilingual missionary work and linked the country to Latin America instead of the black Caribbean. Their perceptions helped to solidify the idea that the Dominican Republic was not a black country after all.

II. Historical Background

In Dominican history, the years 1905–1911 mark the presidency of Ramón Cáceres and the first sustained period of political stability in the twentieth century after the assassination of Afro-Dominican president Ulises Heureaux in 1899. This period is also characterized by the impact of the drastic economic, social, and political transformations in the country that had taken place during the last three decades of the nineteenth century, including the rise of the sugar industry, the immigration of thousands of agricultural laborers from other regions of the Caribbean, and the emergence of the United States as a dominant economic and political aggressor in the region.²² These changes influenced North Atlantic views of Dominicans' religion and race by bringing the Dominican Republic to the center of international politics and into a closer relationship with the United States. Within Protestant circles, it became clear that unlike Cuba and Puerto Rico, where American Protestant missions had made inroads since the Spanish American War (1898), Protestantism had not reached many Spanish-speaking Dominicans.

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, changes in the Dominican export economy attracted foreign investors and transformed the country's relationship with European countries and the United States. In the 1870s, tobacco was the most important export crop, and Dominican peasants in the northern Cibao valley produced their crops primarily for a European market. Their farming techniques relied on small-scale agriculture in which a single family cultivated tobacco that was then sold to foreign markets.²³ The rise of the sugar industry in the southeast during the 1870s–1890s, however, shifted these dynamics.²⁴ The United States instead of Europe became the chief

²²For social transformations in the late nineteenth century, see H. Hoetink, *The Dominican People, 1850–1900: Notes for a Historical Sociology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).

²³Michiel Baud, *Peasants and Tobacco in the Dominican Republic, 1870–1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995); Pedro Luis San Miguel, *Los Campesinos del Cibao: Economía de mercado y transformación agraria en la República Dominicana, 1880–1960* (San Juan: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1997); Patrick Bryan, "The Transition to Plantation Agriculture in the Dominican Republic, 1870–84," *Journal of Caribbean History* 10 (January 1978): 82–105; Kenneth Evan Sharpe, *Peasant Politics: Struggle in a Dominican Village* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977); and Fernando I. Ferrán, *Tobaco y sociedad: La organización del poder en el ecomercado de tabaco dominicano* (Santo Domingo: Fondo para el Avance de las Ciencias Sociales, 1976).

²⁴Bryan, "Transition to Plantation Agriculture," 83; and José del Castillo, "The Formation of the Dominican Sugar Industry: From Competition to Monopoly, from National Semiproletariat to Foreign

consumer of Dominican exports. The cultivation of sugar also required a plantation system in which one owner employed hundreds of laborers. Unlike the tobacco industry, in which Dominicans owned the crop they produced, the main investors in Dominican sugar plantations were foreign. Cuban émigrés and Americans became the most prominent investors, while British, Italian, and French businessmen also invested capital in the industry.²⁵ Land was fertile, readily available, and cheap, and the Dominican government offered additional tax incentives for investors.²⁶ Consequently, the southeastern region of the country, particularly San Pedro de Macorís and La Romana, quickly became sugar enclaves. When sugar prices plummeted in 1884, however, American investors began to consolidate their interests in Dominican sugar by buying out other owners.²⁷ Americans soon came to dominate the sugar industry, which had outgrown the tobacco exports in the north, thus shifting the power of the Dominican economy to the foreign-dominated south.²⁸

The 1884 crack in the sugar market also led to a demographic shift in the sugar-exporting regions of the country. Prior to that moment, plantation owners employed a majority Dominican labor force for the sugarcane harvest. The wages offered for work in the sugar fields attracted Dominican peasants, and other industries suffered for lack of workers.²⁹ However, when planters responded to the 1884 crisis by cutting wages, Dominican day laborers returned to subsistence living.³⁰ Unable to induce Dominicans to work for low wages, plantation owners began to recruit laborers from other regions of the Caribbean. Facing their own financial crisis because of natural disasters and the rise of beet sugar in Europe, thousands of islanders from the Lesser Antilles flocked to the Dominican Republic and other Spanish Caribbean regions in search of work; over 4,000 migrants arrived in the first years of the twentieth century.³¹ The steady increase of non-Spanish-speaking black laborers in the Dominican southeast alarmed Dominican intellectuals and politicians, who preferred white immigration from Europe but were powerless in the face of the influential planter class dominated by Americans in the southeast.³²

In general, the North Atlantic perception of the Dominican Republic as a nonwhite country caused the U.S. government and American business interests to disregard the

Proletariat,” in *Between Slavery and Free Labor: The Spanish-Speaking Caribbean in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Manuel Moreno Fraginals, Frank Moya Pons, and Stanley L. Engerman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 215–234.

²⁵Bryan, “Transition to Plantation Agriculture,” 85, 102.

²⁶Bryan, “Transition to Plantation Agriculture,” 83.

²⁷Bryan, “Transition to Plantation Agriculture,” 105; and José del Castillo, “Formation of the Dominican Sugar Industry,” 229.

²⁸Antonio Lluberes, “La Crisis Del Tabaco Cibaño, 1879–1930,” in *Tabaco, azúcar y minería*, ed. Antonio Lluberes, José del Castillo, and Ramón Alburquerque (Santo Domingo: Editora La Palabra, 1984), 11–16.

²⁹José del Castillo, “Formation of the Dominican Sugar Industry,” 228.

³⁰José del Castillo, “Formation of the Dominican Sugar Industry,” 229.

³¹Dawn Marshall, “A History of West Indian Migrations: Overseas Opportunities and ‘Safety-Valve’ Policies,” in *The Caribbean Exodus*, ed. Barry B. Levine (New York: Praeger, 1987), 20; and José del Castillo, “Formation of the Dominican Sugar Industry,” 232.

³²José del Castillo, *La inmigración de braceros azucareros en La República Dominicana, 1900–1930* (Santo Domingo: Centro Dominicano de Investigaciones Antropológicas, 1978); and Patrick E. Bryan, “Question of Labor in the Sugar Industry of the Dominican Republic in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” in Moreno Fraginals, Moya Pons, and Engerman, *Between Slavery and Free Labor*, 242–248.

Dominican lettered class's hispanophile vision of the nation. Indeed, during Heureaux's presidency (1882–1889), Americans' racial attitudes influenced U.S. diplomatic relations with the country. As Silvio Torres-Saillant and Ramona Hernández have argued in their book, *The Dominican Americans*: “Perhaps the most salient feature of the rapport between the two countries at the time was the U.S. government's choice of black Americans to serve as diplomatic representatives in the Dominican Republic.”³³ During Heureaux's rule, four African American men were appointed as U.S. Consul in Santo Domingo—Henry Astwood, John S. Durham, Archibald Grimke, and Campbell Maxwell; these men were all prominent politicians, journalists, and “race leaders” in the United States. While U.S. presidents reluctantly appointed black men abroad as diplomats, they did so with the understanding that such men would be sent to nonwhite countries.³⁴ This practice ended, however, as diplomatic relations with the Dominican Republic became more significant and Americans' views about the Dominican Republic began to shift. After Campbell Maxwell, a white diplomat took charge of the U.S. consul in Santo Domingo in 1904, a year before Cáceres took office and the same year as Roosevelt's corollary to the Monroe Doctrine.

The Roosevelt corollary, which stated that the United States had the power to use military force to keep European nations out of Latin America, led to a drastic shift in the U.S. policy toward the Dominican Republic. Prior to 1904, the Dominican president, Ulises Heureaux, took loans from various European, American, and Dominican creditors. The loans were in the name of the Dominican government even though Heureaux used them to pay off his political supporters and to run an elaborate network of spies that enabled him to thwart plans to topple his dictatorial regime.³⁵ By 1893, the national debt totaled seventeen million pesos, of which a large fraction represented debts to the Dutch enterprise Westendorp and Company.³⁶ That same year, the Santo Domingo Improvement Company (SDIC), an American enterprise made up of U.S. government officials, assumed Westendorp and Company's debt. Since Westendorp and Company also managed the Dominican Republic's customs receipts, the transfer of debt held by the company to American hands also meant the transfer of control over the nation's greatest source of income. Then, between 1893 and 1907, the United States consolidated its control over the national debt, resulting in the United States' “complete control over Dominican finances.”³⁷ From 1893 until his death in 1899, Heureaux continued to arrange secret loans with the SDIC and foreign businesses. By 1900, the nation's debt totaled over thirty-four million, with creditors in France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, and Britain. Conflict between the SDIC and the Dominican government over payments for loans caused the U.S. government to intervene.³⁸ In 1905, a new agreement between the U.S. and the Cáceres administration gave

³³Silvio Torres-Saillant and Ramona Hernández, *The Dominican Americans* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1998), 22. The same practice was conducted in Haiti, where Frederick Douglass became U.S. minister in 1889.

³⁴Millery Polyné, *From Douglass to Duvalier: U.S. African Americans, Haiti, and Pan Americanism, 1870–1964* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010), 52; Dickson D. Bruce, *Archibald Grimké: Portrait of a Black Independent* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 67–68; and Byrd, *Black Republic*, 37–43.

³⁵Frank Moya Pons, *The Dominican Republic: A National History*, 3rd ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Markus Wiener, 2010), 266–271.

³⁶Moya Pons, *Dominican Republic*, 267.

³⁷Moya Pons, *Dominican Republic*, 295.

³⁸Moya Pons, *Dominican Republic*, 281–282.

the United States control over the customs houses and payments to European creditors. Then, in 1907, the Dominican-American Convention extended this agreement when a U.S. bank consolidated the Dominican Republic's debt and paid off its European creditors. Under this treaty, the United States enforced the same stipulations as it had in 1905. It additionally maintained "the right to interfere in Dominican politics whenever it considered that the operations of the customs receivership or the compliance with the convention were threatened," a stipulation that set the stage for the U.S. Occupation in 1916 and U.S. intervention across Latin America.³⁹

Although the Dominican Republic under Cáceres lost substantial control over its sovereignty as a nation, the United States' control over its customs actually increased revenue for the government. U.S. officials cracked down on contraband and delivered regular payments to the government. These payments increased yearly during Cáceres's administration, and the government then directed the surplus funds to public works. As historian Frank Moya Pons claims, under Cáceres, the government began to build and repair roads, including a connection between the capital and the northern Cibao region.⁴⁰ It also constructed railroads, lighthouses, ports, and docks and invested in schools, which "increased from some 200 in 1904 to 526 in 1910."⁴¹ These improvements drew the attention of North Atlantic visitors to the island. Americans especially viewed the changes as evidence of the country's progress under U.S. influence.

In view of these transformations, some British and American Protestants began to express concern that they had not yet evangelized the Catholic country. In their minds, the history of Protestantism on the island left much to be desired.⁴² The first Protestants to settle in eastern Hispaniola were black emigrants from the United States who fled the United States for Haiti in the 1820s because of slavery and the discrimination that plagued free blacks in the U.S. North.⁴³ Many of these emigrants were members of the AME Church in the United States and they established AME societies during the Haitian Unification period (1822–1844).⁴⁴ In the 1830s, British Wesleyan missionaries took over these societies in eastern Hispaniola and also established missionary outposts in Port-au-Prince and the northern regions of Haiti.⁴⁵ When the Dominican Republic gained independence from Haiti in 1844, these Wesleyan societies maintained their Haitian-Dominican circuit, thus connecting the two sides of the island

³⁹Moya Pons, *Dominican Republic*, 295; and Cyrus Veese, *A World Safe for Capitalism: Dollar Diplomacy and America's Rise to Global Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 4–7.

⁴⁰Moya Pons, *Dominican Republic*, 299.

⁴¹Moya Pons, *Dominican Republic*, 299.

⁴²For a general history, see George A. Lockward, *El protestantismo en Dominicana*, 2nd ed. (Santo Domingo: Editora Educativa Dominicana, 1982).

⁴³Rayford Logan, *Diplomatic Relations of the United States with Haiti, 1776–1891* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), 216–217; James O'Dell Jackson, "The Origins of Pan-African Nationalism: Afro-American and Haytian Relations, 1800–1863" (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1976); Chris Dixon, *Africa America and Haiti: Emigration and Black Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 2000); H. Hoetink, "'Americans' in Samaná," *Caribbean Studies* 2, no. 1 (April 1962): 3–22; Sara Fanning, *Caribbean Crossing: African Americans and the Haitian Emigration Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2014); and Dennis Hidalgo, *La primera inmigración de negros libertos norteamericanos y su asentamiento en la Española (1824–1826)* (Santo Domingo: Academia Dominicana de la Historia, 2016).

⁴⁴Daniel A. Payne, *History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Nashville: A. M. E. Sunday-School Union, 1891), 477.

⁴⁵Leslie Griffiths, *History of Methodism in Haiti* (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie Méthodiste, 1991), 58–59.

through their religious networks.⁴⁶ The AME Church reestablished contact with descendants of black emigrants in 1882 when AME minister and U.S. Consul Henry Astwood reorganized the AME Church in the capital.⁴⁷ By 1900, two other denominations had founded missions in the Dominican Republic: the American Free Methodists in 1889 and the Anglicans in 1897.⁴⁸ Stationed in Santiago and San Pedro de Macorís, respectively, these missions remained small throughout the first decade of the twentieth century. Thus, during 1905–1911, the Dominican Republic appeared as a blank field to North Atlantic Protestants, who viewed the Catholic Church as insufficient in its spiritual work among the Dominican people.

The Catholic Church, however, was deeply entrenched in Dominican cultural and national life while official Dominican history construed Protestants as outsiders.⁴⁹ Consequently, the Dominican government generally ignored the Protestant communities that existed on the island. The Dominican constitution protected the freedom of religion, but Catholicism was the official state religion. In isolated moments, Protestants faced persecution for their beliefs.⁵⁰ This was particularly true during Spanish annexation (1861–1865) when the Spanish archbishop, Bienvenido Monzón, closed Protestant churches in the capital, Samaná, and Puerto Plata and many Protestants fled from these towns.⁵¹ Yet, after the War of Restoration (1863–1865), when the Dominican Republic regained independence, Protestants who had fought as Dominicans in the war claimed Dominican nationality. The lettered class, the majority of whom did not perceive the Protestants as a threat to the traditional power of the Catholic Church, tacitly supported their claim. Indeed, instead of Protestantism, the Catholic Church found its greatest threat in the liberal reforms to education put forth by the Puerto Rican philosopher Eugenio María de Hostos in the late nineteenth century. The presidential term of the Catholic priest Fernando Arturo de Meriño

⁴⁶George Gillanders Findlay and William West Holdsworth, *The History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society* (London: Epworth, 1921), 491–493.

⁴⁷Christina Cecelia Davidson, “Black Protestants in a Catholic Land: The AME Church in the Dominican Republic 1899–1916,” *New West Indian Guide* 89, no. 3–4 (2015): 268; Nehemiah Willmore, “Esbozo histórico de la llegada de inmigrantes afro-americanos a la isla de Santo Domingo y Haití,” *Boletín del Archivo General de La Nación* 36, no. 129 (2011): 260–261; and Lockward, *El protestantismo en Dominicana*, 292.

⁴⁸Emelio Betances, *The Catholic Church and Power Politics in Latin America: The Dominican Case in Comparative Perspective* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 213; Philip E. Wheaton and William L. Wipfer, *Triunfando sobre las tragedias: Historia centenaria de la Iglesia Episcopal Dominicana, 1897–1997* (Santo Domingo: Editora Educativa Dominicana, 1997), 19–40; and Lockward, *El protestantismo en Dominicana*, 292–302.

⁴⁹Fernando Pérez Memén, “Relaciones entre la iglesia y el estado en el período 1898–1934,” in *El padre Castellanos*, ed. Rafael Bello Peguero (Santo Domingo: Editora Amigo del Hogar, 1991), 15, 13–35; and H. E. Polanco Brito, “La iglesia católica y la primera constitución Dominicana,” *Clío* 38, no. 125 (January–August 1970): 8–12.

⁵⁰Luis Martínez-Fernández, “The Sword and the Crucifix: Church-State Relations and Nationality in the Nineteenth-Century Dominican Republic,” *Latin American Research Review* 30, no. 1 (1995): 71–72, 83.

⁵¹*Report of the Commission of Inquiry to Santo Domingo* (Government Printing Office, 1871), 222; Lockward, *El protestantismo en Dominicana*, 71–83; Martínez-Fernández, “The Sword and the Crucifix,” 83; Anne Eller, *We Dream Together: Dominican Independence, Haiti, and the Fight for Caribbean Freedom* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2016), 133–134; and Gerald Horne, *Confronting Black Jacobins: The United States, the Haitian Revolution, and the Question of the Dominican Republic* (New York: Monthly Review, 2015) 267–268.

(1882–1884), however, curtailed such reforms.⁵² Then, during Heureaux’s presidency, Meriño became the archbishop of Santo Domingo (1885–1906), and the Catholic Church gained greater influence over politics as Heureaux worked to align his regime with the church in order to gain the support of the Dominican populace.⁵³ Thus, as Luis Martínez-Fernández has argued, throughout the nineteenth century (and into the present), “the Catholic Church remained a bastion of Dominican nationality, which it sought to define on the bases of religious purity, anti-Haitianism, and Europhilia.”⁵⁴ Meanwhile, the Dominican government generally ignored Protestants, who held little sway over national politics.

While all North Atlantic missionaries—both black and white—recognized the influence of the Catholic Church as a key barrier to Protestant conversion in the Dominican Republic, only white British and American ministers linked the supposed solution to race. As Mears’s comments above and below demonstrate, British Wesleyan and white American church leaders believed that only white missionaries would be able to decouple the strong tie between nationalism and Catholicism, and thus prove that Dominican nationality existed independently of religious affiliation to the Catholic Church. This perspective, however, depended on an elite vision of Dominican national identity and an alienation from the poorest class of Dominicans who, because of their poverty and phenotypically darker complexion, had more direct contact with African American and black British Protestant people already living on the island. To white North Atlantic ministers, winning the hearts of Dominicans meant targeting the lettered elite Dominican class. Black Protestant ministers, however, took a different view. The perspectives of various Protestant leaders—the British Wesleyan clergyman Emerson Mears; the black pastors Benjamin Wilson, Charles E. Goodin, and Jacob Paul James; and the American missionaries Philo W. Drury and Nathan H. Huffman—provide further insight on North Atlantic religious leaders’ perceptions of Dominican religiosity and race, and evidence the distinctions.

III. Negro Migrants versus Spanish Dominicans: A British Missionary’s Viewpoint

Emerson Mears had lived in the Dominican Republic for over a decade when he communicated candidly with his superiors in Jamaica and London about the state of the British Wesleyan missions in the Dominican Republic in 1905.⁵⁵ From his perspective, the method of British missionary work in this Spanish-speaking country did not make sense. The British Wesleyan mission had operated in Puerto Plata since the early 1830s, and in the seventy-some years since its inception, the character of the mission had completely changed. Mears informed the London society that at first the mission served “American coloured immigrants,” but by 1905, the congregation consisted of mostly “English colonials of the poorer working classes.” These British Caribbean migrants

⁵²Betances, *Catholic Church and Power Politics*, 28–30.

⁵³Mu-Kien A. Sang, *Ulises Heureaux: Biografía de un dictador* (Santo Domingo: Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo, 1989), 105–113.

⁵⁴Martínez-Fernández, “Sword and the Crucifix,” 70.

⁵⁵Mears served first in Sánchez, where he arrived in 1892. He moved to Puerto Plata in 1903 and served in the Dominican Republic until his death in 1942. His wife, Margaret Mears, is well-known for her work in the medical field. A trained nurse, she opened a clinic and trained hundreds of Dominican women: Edward A. Odell, *It Came to Pass* (New York: Board of National Missions, Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1952), 147.

seemed “non-progressive and spiritually decadent,” in Mears’s eyes, and Mears judged that such a church could “exert little or no influence upon the nation at large.”⁵⁶ Mears believed that Anglophone black migrants could not mix with Dominicans, and therefore, the Wesleyan mission had missed an opportunity to minister to people who would otherwise be receptive to the Protestant church despite the prevalence of Catholicism.

The problem, according to Mears, lay in the bureaucracy of the British Wesleyan Church’s Western West Indian Conference, which from 1885 until 1904 included Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The physical distance of the conference, which was headquartered in Jamaica, meant that the highest-ranking officer of the church lived miles away on an English-speaking island where the missionary concerns differed from those in Hispaniola. Furthermore, the British missionaries had done little to build up Spanish-language missions. The Dominican Republic made up part of a joint synod with Haiti, a francophone country. Per tradition, Haitian missions held priority over the stations in Dominican territory, and the superintendent of the district always lived in Port-au-Prince, isolated from events on the eastern side of the island in Puerto Plata, Samaná, and Santo Domingo. Most of the British missionaries stationed in the Dominican Republic spoke English or French, not Spanish. Moreover, the Missionary Society designated the greater part of its funds for other countries in the Caribbean. Perhaps these conditions would have made sense when Haiti governed the whole island (1822–1844) or when the Wesleyan missionaries began their work in eastern Hispaniola and served only English-speaking immigrants from the United States and the surrounding islands. Yet now, in the first decade of the twentieth century, such circumstances produced an unusual situation: “Our present position is this,” Mears assessed in 1907, “in Hayti we form a national church, whilst here we do not, and are to some extent out of the current of the national life.”⁵⁷ In short, British Wesleyan missionaries in the Dominican Republic did not serve the local population, as they did in Jamaica and Haiti. In Mears’s mind, this fact contradicted the idea of evangelical Protestant missions.

A true missionary church, according to Mears, would target a broader base of the Dominican population. From his experiences in Puerto Plata, Mears perceived the Dominican population as consisting of three primary classes: First, he identified a class made up of the “English speaking negroes” from surrounding islands. Second, he listed a class which consisted of “descendants of Protestants who are the children of white and coloured parentage who have risen in the social scale, or who have intermarried with natives and are now practically Dominicans.” Mears explained that this class was Spanish speaking and “not attached to Rome in sentiment.” Last, Mears listed “the mass of the Dominicans who are Spanish speaking Roman Catholics of a liberal type, of the nominally free thinking or anti-clerical” as the final class. It was this last class of people who were in the greatest need of missionary work. Yet instead of evangelizing classes two and three—which “form the nation proper” according to Mears—the Wesleyans concerned themselves with the first class of transient Anglophone Protestant blacks. “Our work is now almost exclusively composed of class one; for class two we do not cater, & class three continues untouched almost,” Mears clarified. Thus, he advised that the British Wesleyans change their missionary focus and target the Spanish-speaking Dominican population.⁵⁸

⁵⁶Mears, “Wesleyan Methodist Missions in the Dominican Republic.”

⁵⁷Emerson Mears to [John] Milton Brown, 16 March 1907, Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, West Indies Correspondence (H-2707), microfiche 2064, Methodist Missionary Society Archives, London.

⁵⁸Mears to Brown, 16 March 1907.

Mears's description of the Dominican population demonstrates the degree to which he both racially separated himself and other European migrants from Dominicans and applied his perception of racial division in Puerto Plata to the whole country. The fact that Mears divided the Dominican population into three classes, including black migrants as the first class and descendants of black Protestants as the second class, reflects his experiences in Puerto Plata where large numbers of people representing these categories existed.⁵⁹ This was not the case elsewhere in the country, since mixed-race Protestant populations ("class two") existed in large numbers only in a few regions.⁶⁰ Similarly, black Anglophone migrants from the surrounding islands did not represent the sum of the foreign population living in the Dominican Republic, which also received immigrants from Europe, the Middle East, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Haiti, and elsewhere.⁶¹ Mears did not include such people in his description of the Dominican population or portray other such migrants as possible recipients of British Wesleyan missionary work. Instead, he created a scaled racial categorization in which Dominicans existed as a racial "other," despite their position at the top of the hierarchy. This conceptualization ignored the diversity of people living in Puerto Plata and Dominican society in general. It also demonstrated the racial ambiguity that Dominicans possessed in the minds of white missionaries such as Mears. In his letters, "Spanish" became a referent to a liminal category that was not black but also not white. While Mears used racial terminology for black Anglophone migrants and characterized descendants of black Protestants as mixed race, he did not use skin color terminology to denote the Dominican majority. According to Mears's categorization, Spanish language and native birth denoted one's place at the top of the hierarchy of nonwhite people in the Dominican Republic, apparently without regard to color.

In order to convert this dominant echelon of Dominican society, Mears believed that Wesleyans missionaries would have to do more than merely provide Spanish religious services. Adaptation of missionary methods required a total change in how the British thought about Dominicans' racial status. Reflecting the views and values of elite Dominicans, Mears perceived a racial divide between the black Anglophone migrants and Spanish-speaking Dominicans. He asserted that: "Dominican public opinion is only tolerant of class one ["English-speaking negroes"] & is opposed to any augmentation of it."⁶² Mears also divulged that: "The Dominicans to an extent resent the presence

⁵⁹Mears to Brown, 16 March 1907. Outside of Puerto Plata, British Wesleyan missionary stations in the Dominican Republic existed in northern provinces of Samaná and Sánchez. In each northern station, the state of the mission was more or less the same; the congregations had no Dominican members. In Puerto Plata, Turks Islanders made up the majority of the membership, "the American immigrants having been nearly absorbed in the Spanish speaking population." In Samaná, the story differed slightly, for there was still a robust presence of American descendants. Mears explained that "the natural growth of the coloured American colony there has given us an increase which may mislead if only statistics be considered." Sánchez was more like Puerto Plata with its foreign element. There the membership was "mostly composed of people from St. Thomas and Tortola." These statistics worried Mears, for the north had traditionally been the focal point of the Wesleyan missions, and it was there that they had churches, schools, and missionary houses.

⁶⁰Outside of Puerto Plata, known regions are Samaná, Santo Domingo, Higüey, and Neiba. For Higüey, see *Report of the Commission of Inquiry to Santo Domingo*, 224. For Neiba, see José A. Robert, *La Evolución Histórica de Barahona* (Ciudad Trujillo: Editora del Caribe, 1953), 58–59. Thank you to Anne Eller for pointing me to Robert's text for this Neiba reference.

⁶¹Orlando Inoa, *Azúcar: Árabes, cocos y haitianos* (Santo Domingo: Editora Cole, 1999); and Hoetink, *Dominican People*, 19–36.

⁶²Mears to Brown, 16 March 1907.

of the English blacks.”⁶³ Due to this sentiment, Mears believed that grouping the Dominican Republic under the western conference in Jamaica proved problematic. “The Dominican Republic is not connected with Jamaica in any way, nor is the ordinary Jamaican at all welcome here,” he justified.⁶⁴ In Mears’s mind, the fact that black Anglophone Caribbeans made up the majority of the Wesleyan congregation in Puerto Plata drove away the Dominicans who did not want to associate themselves with black migrants.

Mears’s viewpoint reflected the Dominican elites’ racist views of black migrants, thousands of whom had migrated to the Dominican Republic to work in the growing sugar industry during the last three decades of the nineteenth century.⁶⁵ The Dominican elite interpreted the mass immigration of these migrants and the increasingly American-dominated sugar industry as antithetical to their national aims of “whitening” the nation through European immigration and maintaining national sovereignty over the export economy.⁶⁶ They articulated their protests in racialized terms that shunned black foreigners, “marginaliz[ing them] because of their ‘strange’ practices” and referring to them as “degraded, low-status workers [in order to associate] blackness with foreignness.”⁶⁷ Black migration from Jamaica and the eastern Caribbean challenged elites’ notions of the Dominican Republic as a mixed-race, culturally European space more closely related to Spain and France than Haiti or the former slave societies of the British, French, and Dutch islands. Within this mindset, the idea of possible Anglophone black migrants’ integration into the Dominican nation did not hold water. Mears’s letters captured this general sentiment.

Yet Mears’s ideas did not just reflect of Dominican elites’ concerns, they also matched other white North Atlantic assessments of Latin American countries. Mears underscored the salience of his ideas by pointing to common missionary practices. “Mixed services are of little practical use in this country,” he warned, “and this is the opinion of all workers in Spanish countries.” Highlighting the work of white American missionaries in Puerto Rico and Cuba, he noted their success after the Spanish American War of 1898 and indicated that they had found the same racial divisions to hold true. In order to grow a native church, missionaries had to take into account the “peculiar conditions that prevail” in each country. In other words, they had to consider race relations in the host country. Raising an Anglophone black church among migrants who were already Protestant, or even a bilingual English-Spanish church, in the Dominican Republic was an impractical path for a nation that claimed to be Spanish, Catholic, and culturally white. Thus, Mears asked the missionary board to finance special training for both Englishmen and “high class” European Dominicans in order to cater to the public’s supposed desire for white, Spanish-speaking clergy.⁶⁸

⁶³Mears, “Wesleyan Methodist Missions in the Dominican Republic.”

⁶⁴Mears, “Wesleyan Methodist Missions in the Dominican Republic.”

⁶⁵Bryan, “Transition to Plantation Agriculture”; and José del Castillo, “Formation of the Dominican Sugar Industry.”

⁶⁶Cassá, “El Racismo en la ideología de la clase dominante dominicana,” 65–66; del Castillo, *La Inmigración de Braceros Azucareros*, 42; Baud, “Constitutionally White,” 125; and Howard, *Coloring the Nation*, 24.

⁶⁷Teresita Martínez-Verge, *Nation and Citizen in the Dominican Republic, 1880–1916* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 87; and Mayes, *Mulatto Republic*, 88.

⁶⁸Mears, “Wesleyan Methodist Missions in the Dominican Republic.”

Mears's plans for missionary work also included an assessment of the current missionary field on the island. He believed that the British Wesleyans could have a monopoly on the missionary field in the Dominican Republic because, in his mind, there were "no evangelical churches of importance working here." Moreover, the Catholic Church was "losing hold of the people." In Mears's biased opinion, "liberal ideas are more prevalent" in the Dominican Republic than in Haiti. The Dominican people supposedly seemed more interested in education and opposed the influence of the Catholic Church over politics. Moreover, the Catholic Church could not dominate every part of the island. According to Mears, the Dominican Catholic Church "in comparison with Hayti is undermanned and not so efficiently worked." Consequently, he believed that the British Wesleyan Church had an opportunity to gain numbers within their ranks. The fact that Wesleyan congregations already existed in important, highly populated port towns meant that the British could easily expand toward the interior once they converted a large number of Dominicans. According to Mears: "The number of men required [would] be relatively small in regard to the large influence we may exert." Given the prevailing conditions, Mears believed that the time was ripe for Protestant evangelical missions in the Dominican Republic. He thus urged the London Missionary Society to "do for the Dominican native work what was done for the Haytian work three quarters of a century ago." If the British Wesleyan Church cared at all for its work in the Dominican Republic, it would act quickly.⁶⁹

Yet, action would require "men and means," which the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society had struggled to provide for its Caribbean missionary stations since the mid-nineteenth century. By the end of the same century, straitened finances had caused the church leadership to cancel annual meetings of the General West Indian Conference (of which the Dominican Republic formed part) and lower ministerial salaries.⁷⁰ Then, facing further difficulty in 1903, the leaders of the eastern and western divisions of the West Indian Conference declared themselves incapable of continuing the work, resigned their commission, and requested that the London-based missionary society take charge of Caribbean missions; the British West Indian Conference once again came under the British yearly conference in 1904.⁷¹ At that time, debts for the whole region totaled £62,000, with deficits on accounts consisting of another £3,000. As George Gillanders Findlay and William West Holdsworth claim: "With its existing income pledged to the support of the work in other fields, the Missionary Society had no funds available to meet the burden."⁷² Still, Mears believed that to fulfill its potential in the Dominican Republic, the Wesleyan missions would have to be fully supported financially. To this end, Mears advocated for the separation of the Dominican Republic from the Haitian synod. This division would not only correspond to the political and supposed racial divisions between the two countries, but he argued that it would also prove more economical because it would eliminate the need for leaders such as himself to travel between the two territories. Mears also suggested that "aid must be given to place our buildings in fair order, and to provide schoolrooms etc. . . . Each minister [should be able] to receive his salary without deduction."⁷³ These changes would supposedly enable Dominican-based missionaries to strategically

⁶⁹Mears to Brown, 16 March 1907.

⁷⁰Findlay and Holdsworth, *History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*, 462–464.

⁷¹Findlay and Holdsworth, *History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*, 472–473.

⁷²Findlay and Holdsworth, *History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*, 472.

⁷³Mears, "Wesleyan Methodist Missions in the Dominican Republic."

adapt to both the social and economic realities of the country. Likely aware of the dire financial situation of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, Mears's words demonstrate his attempt to secure limited funds. They also reveal his profound racial calculus; by separating the Dominican Republic from the Haitian synod, the country could be positioned as a Latin nation and would be disassociated from Haitian blackness, which could possibly engender greater financial support from Britain.

Although Mears hoped that his words would convince the committee to invest in Dominican missionary work, Mears presented one caveat. If the British Wesleyans were not prepared to commit to Dominican missions, the denomination should hand over the work to another white Protestant sect, such as the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States, which would equip its missionaries with, "men, money, & method." Indeed, by the early 1900s, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society had far fewer financial resources than the American Methodist Episcopal Church. Mears openly disclosed his position: "If we are not prepared to go forward, to change our [mode] of working for a more logical and apostolic one; or if our problems in the English islands are more than sufficient for us, let us have the grace to ask our brethren of the M.E. church, north, to take over our present stations in the Dominican Republic."⁷⁴ In Mears's mind, it was better to leave the work with the Americans or another white denomination than to continue to deter Dominicans from converting to Protestantism. By doing so, Mears concluded, the Wesleyan Church would "cease to be an impediment in the way of the evangelization of this country." The solution was a simple one, although it posed a moral question to the British Wesleyan missionary committee. Would the British denomination set aside its pride to do what was best for the Dominican people? If not, would it stand by its commitment and properly finance its missions? "If we can grapple with the Dominican problem successfully, we shall then be able to do our part in preaching Christ in the numerous Spanish countries of the Western world," Mears entreated.⁷⁵ The Dominican Republic—a *Spanish* (as in Latin) country—could become the British Wesleyan Church's primary station in Latin America.

IV. "Mixed" Congregations: Black Ministers in the Dominican Southeast

Miles away in the southeastern region of the country, bilingual congregations led by black ministers of various denominations continued their work amid the impoverished classes of black Anglophone migrants and Spanish-speaking Dominicans. These "mixed," bilingual congregations, albeit poorly funded, existed as counter models to Mears's perspective. In 1907, Reverend Charles E. Goodin, a minister from Jamaica affiliated with the British Wesleyan Church, reported that: "Services are generally carried out in English and Spanish. Many natives are interested and we have two helpers among them."⁷⁶ Reverend Jacob Paul James of the African Methodist Episcopal Church also noted Dominican interest and the potential of growing his congregation in the initial years after his arrival in January 1899. In San Pedro de Macoris, Reverend Benjamin Wilson, an Episcopal priest associated with the well-known African American bishop James T. Holly of Haiti, offered bilingual services and ran

⁷⁴Mears, "Wesleyan Methodist Missions in the Dominican Republic."

⁷⁵Mears, "Wesleyan Methodist Missions in the Dominican Republic."

⁷⁶Charles E. Goodin to Emerson Mears, 12 March 1907, Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, West Indies Correspondence (H-2707), microfiche 2064, Methodist Missionary Society Archives, London.

a bilingual school for migrant and Dominican children. The fact that black pastors led these congregations, operated in both English and Spanish, and united black Protestant migrants with Spanish-speaking Dominicans contradicted Mears's notion that Dominicans would only accept white ministers and that mixed congregations could not work in the Dominican Republic. Thus, these bilingual congregations existed as spaces where a poorer class of people could imagine a different missionary future for the Dominican Republic than the one that Mears proposed.

Between 1905 and 1911, however, the possibility of bilingual congregations led by black ministers faded quickly. While the aforementioned black ministers continued in their bilingual work initially, their marginalized status within Dominican society and the lack of foreign financial support for their work resulted in their eventual demise. Consequently, few documents remain regarding the bilingual congregations that existed in the Dominican Republic at the turn of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, a profile of the ministers and their congregations indicates their aims and reveals the hope that they had for mixed-ethnic, bilingual Protestant missionary work in the Catholic country.

Of the three men, Goodin had the most experience in the Dominican capital. He arrived in Santo Domingo in 1888 after spending time in the United States and becoming affiliated with the AME Church there. Once in Santo Domingo, Goodin began to work among the descendants of black American immigrants who had formed an AME congregation under the leadership of the U.S. Consul Henry Astwood in 1882. After a bitter legal dispute in 1892, Goodin and other members of the congregation broke from the AME denomination and joined the British Wesleyan Church. The new Wesleyan congregation in the capital gained some Spanish-speaking members (including descendants of black Americans), and Goodin became well respected in the capital for his work. Aware of Goodin's congregation, Mears wrote in a 1907 report to the British Wesleyan Church that Goodin "does good Spanish work." The black preacher had learned Spanish "at some expense to himself," and Mears informed the church that Goodin "teaches and preaches regularly in the language."⁷⁷ Yet, despite this positive report, Goodin received no financial assistance from the British Wesleyan Church. Instead, his limited funding came from the Christian and Missionary Alliance of New York, which had supported Goodin since 1892. Such an arrangement with an American institution could have set British Wesleyan leaders against Goodin if it had formed on a British island, but in the Dominican Republic, where the Catholic Church predominated, foreign Protestant missionary agents and societies historically cooperated with each other. Throughout the nineteenth century, local Protestants affiliated with distinct institutions (or switched easily between them) in order to gain material benefits. Thus, Mears likely saw Goodin's affiliation with the American group as a boon. The British minister, however, stopped short of recommending that the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society fund Goodin, a black preacher, instead of sending white missionaries from abroad.

Reverend Benjamin Wilson found himself in a similar situation regarding the lack of funds. Born and raised in Saint Croix, Wilson studied religion with the Christian and Missionary Alliance in New York. He then moved with his family to Samaná, the northeastern peninsula of the Dominican Republic, in the late 1880s. In 1891, he moved to San Pedro de Macorís. Between 1891 and 1897, Wilson affiliated with Bishop James T. Holly's independent Anglican church in Port-au-Prince where he visited Holly on

⁷⁷Mears to Brown, 16 March 1907.

various occasions to continue his religious training. During this time, he also began a missionary church in San Pedro de Macoris: Santa Trinidad, named after Holly's Haitian congregation. In 1897, Santa Trinidad came under the auspices of the Holly's Haitian church, L'Eglise Orthodoxe Apostolique Haitienne. The conditions for their union indicate Holly and Wilson's vision for the San Pedro mission, as articulated by historians Philip E. Wheaton and William L. Wipfer: "That the Episcopal Church in the Dominican Republic would expand until it became a national and independent church."⁷⁸ To this end, Wilson "envisioned an integrated church—Antillean and Dominican."⁷⁹ He held services in Spanish and English. He also ran a day school with thirty-seven pupils and "taught in English and Spanish to pupils speaking those languages respectively."⁸⁰ Yet, since the Haitian Episcopal Church depended on financial support from the United States, it was too poor to assist the San Pedro congregation in the Dominican Republic. This fact, according to Wheaton and Wipfer, "would become the Achilles heel for Wilson's missionary work since in the future it would suffer because of the lack of financial support from abroad."⁸¹ Like Goodin's work, financial issues hindered the progress of Wilson's church.

The same was no less true for Reverend Jacob Paul James, who revitalized the AME missionary church in Santo Domingo in 1898. Like Goodin and Wilson, James maintained ties to a foreign Protestant institution. Yet, unlike the other pastors, James was born in the Dominican Republic, the son of the well-known black preacher of the British Wesleyan Church, Reverend Jacob James of Samaná. James (junior) intended to follow in his father's footsteps, but when the Wesleyan Church refused to accept him at its seminary school—likely due to his race—he left Samaná to pursue education in the United States. Beginning in 1882, James attended the Beloit Academy in Wisconsin, joined the AME Church, and pastored various congregations in the U.S. Midwest before returning to the Dominican Republic in 1899. Once in Santo Domingo, James took hold of the AME congregation in the capital. He preached in both English and Spanish, and like Wilson, he began a day school where he taught both languages. James, however, constantly petitioned the AME missionary department in the United States for aid. He believed that the AME Church could grow in the Dominican Republic if it had the proper support, but without financial help and additional missionaries, he could not compete with the Catholic Church or white Protestant missionaries.⁸²

Despite their bilingual evangelism, by 1905, Goodin's, Wilson's, and James's congregations had not grown much among Dominicans. While Mears most likely saw their failure as evidence of the racial divide between Anglophone Afro-Caribbean Protestants and Dominican Catholics, James and Goodin discussed the difficulties they faced in terms of finances and not race. On October 26, 1905, James penned a report on the church in Santo Domingo to the AME missionary department in New York. "The work of the missions have [*sic*] steadily and quietly gone on," he informed them, "but the results are not all that we expected." He explained: "We put forth great efforts and expected great results."⁸³ Yet, the congregation faced two

⁷⁸Wheaton and Wipfer, *Triunfando sobre las tragedias*, 31–32.

⁷⁹Wheaton and Wipfer, *Triunfando sobre las tragedias*, 27.

⁸⁰James Theodore Holly, "Haiti: Bishop Holly's Visit to San Pedro de Macoris, Dominica," *Spirit of Missions* 63, no. 5 (May 1898): 224, quoted in Wheaton and Wipfer, *Triunfando sobre las tragedias*, 33.

⁸¹Wheaton and Wipfer, *Triunfando sobre las tragedias*, 31.

⁸²Davidson, "Black Protestants in a Catholic Land," 269–281.

⁸³J. P. James, "A Word from Santo Domingo," *Voice of Missions* 13, no. 11 (November 1905): 19.

principle difficulties: “The continual removals of our people . . . to other places, and the almost impoverished condition of our people.”⁸⁴ James could not ask the people to give more to the church when they did not have the money to give, and he continued to receive very little financial support from the impoverished African American denomination. Similarly, Goodin’s congregation was also not faring well. In 1907, Goodin disclosed to Mears that he had worked as an independent missionary for the Christian and Missionary Alliance of New York since 1894 and had not received any financial help from the British Wesleyan Church, although he was also affiliated with them. Explaining the particulars of his situation, he wrote: “My family of 7 with myself and wife cannot be supported by the allowance the Alliance gives (\$30 a month, sometimes \$20 and sometimes \$15). I have therefore and do a great deal of teaching in the city to make existence possible.”⁸⁵ The lack of financial support from the AME Church, the Christian and Missionary Alliance, the Episcopal Church, and the British Wesleyan Church meant that James, Goodin, and Wilson could not provide for themselves or their parishioners’ needs, and their evangelistic work suffered as a result. Ultimately, the financial constraints that they experienced prevented them from expanding their churches through missionary engagements and relegated them to working with the most marginalized of Dominican society: Anglophone black migrants from the surrounding islands, the majority of whom were already Protestants.

Significantly, although all missionary institutions at this point could not adequately provide for their stations in the Dominican Republic, only the AME Church and Holly’s Haitian Episcopal Church advocated for black ecclesiastical leadership. This distinction highlights the fact that white missionaries and their organizations lacked imagination regarding black leadership potential and that their biases influenced their distribution of limited missionary funds. The British Wesleyan Methodist Church, for example, depended upon black preachers like Goodin to maintain congregations on the island. Yet such preachers remained in a liminal state vis-à-vis white missionaries like Mears, who wrote from a position of relative privilege even while the Dominican Republic existed on the sidelines of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society’s operations. The refusal of white missionaries to recommend or employ the bilingual mixed-congregation techniques that black missionaries like Holly, Goodin, and James used in the south of the country indicates white missionaries’ historical bias, which ultimately deterred the growth of bilingual, black-led congregations. It also signaled a refusal to recognize the cross-ethnic ties formed in bilingual Protestant churches.

The story of the AME Church in the capital provides greater insight on the decline of bilingual missionary work and the relegation of black ministers to homogeneous black migrant congregations. When James took over the church in the capital in 1899, it was only a shell of what it had been in the 1880s when over one hundred people attended the weekly services and the Dominican government aided in the reconstruction of its church building. The two properties that Henry Astwood had acquired for the AME Church in 1882 were “valuable church lots in the City of Santo Domingo,” but the church building was once again in disrepair and James could not raise enough money among the few dozen congregants to reconstruct it.⁸⁶ His resources spread even thinner when a group of men and women in his hometown of Samaná asked

⁸⁴James, “A Word from Santo Domingo.”

⁸⁵Goodin to Mears, 12 March 1907.

⁸⁶J. P. James, “A.M.E. Church Work at Samana, Santo Domingo,” *Voice of Missions* 18, no. 2 (February 1910): 6–7.

him to begin the AME denomination on the northern peninsula in October 1899.⁸⁷ A year later, James also took hold of missionary stations in Monte Cristi and San Pedro de Macorís. Although James took it upon himself to guide these groups in the AME discipline, he could not adequately serve four AME societies at once. The Sunday school and congregation of forty-five members that he had established in the capital in 1898 consequently suffered.

Like other ministers working in foreign countries on behalf of home missionary boards in the North Atlantic, James requested help from his denomination's missionary department. His first letters were bold in their requests for aid. On August 23, 1900, James explained to the missionary department that the AME societies in Monte Cristi, Samaná, and San Pedro de Macorís all needed places of worship. The parishioners in Samaná and San Pedro found it especially hard to rent property due to discrimination from Catholics. "This makes our own place of worship that much greater," reasoned James.⁸⁸ He requested \$600 to build chapels in these two towns and urged the missionary department and church to "first assist the missionaries already organized . . . and then send to them pastors." Regarding pastors, James suggested that such men "be acquainted with the Spanish language," indicating his intention to minister to the Spanish-speaking Dominican population. James, moreover, felt "opposed to [the] Church sending missionaries to any part of the work in [the republic] unless [the] missionary department can give support regularly for at least two years."⁸⁹ Based on James's experience, a failed mission without support from the missionary department would do more harm than good.⁹⁰ The establishment of four AME societies in less than two years was a promising advancement, but unless the missionary department could support these stations, the progress would soon cease.

By 1901, it became clear that the AME missionary department could not send the needed funds to the Dominican Republic. James moved his headquarters from Santo Domingo to Samaná, where he believed that the church would thrive better than in the capital—the seat of Catholic power in the country. Over the next decade, James worked more closely with the black American population in Samaná than he did with the AME Church in Santo Domingo, and consequently, the Samaná mission grew at a greater rate than the church in the capital city. While the Santo Domingo congregation suffered from a lack of financial aid and from its proximity to the archdiocese of the Catholic Church, James's congregation in the north built a church, a parsonage, and a farm. By 1908, the property in Samaná valued \$6,000 while in Santo Domingo it amounted to \$2,000. The Samaná congregation also made up the majority of the members of the AME Church (135) as the few members in Santo Domingo (50) still waited for an ordained pastor to permanently lead the mission.⁹¹

⁸⁷Lockward, *El protestantismo en Dominicana*, 183–185.

⁸⁸J. P. James, "Santo Domingo City: August 23rd," *Christian Recorder*, 20 September 1900.

⁸⁹James, "Santo Domingo City."

⁹⁰There was previously an AME society of fifteen members and a local preacher in Monte Cristi. The congregation, however, could not support the preacher financially, and consequently, he abandoned the work. "This was very discouraging to the little mission, so much so that many of them have connected themselves with other churches," James lamented. He suggested that the missionary to be appointed to Monte Cristi be a teacher who could support himself by charging tuition. James, "Santo Domingo City."

⁹¹J. P. James, "Quadrennial Report of Rev. J. P. James," *Voice of Missions* 16, no. 7 (July 1908): 11–12. The minister who James left in charge when he went to Samaná had died in 1906: J. P. James, "The Missionary Work in Samana," *Voice of Missions* 14, no. 5 (May 1906): 2.

James faced other limitations in the capital. Instead of receiving government aid as in former decades, the Protestants faced pressure from the Catholic Church and the government. In a 1910 letter to the AME missionary department, James explained: "Our work in Santo Domingo City is in the midst of a purely Roman Catholic population, and the power of the Roman Catholic clergy is vigilantly exercised. Our work there is confined to narrow limits." He additionally complained that the government put pressure on the mission to comply with city ordinances in the capital, which required "that all buildings built in the city must be either stone or iron, especially public buildings." He begged the AME missionary department to send aid so that they could rebuild the church. "In this Catholic community where outward appearance has so much to do with religion a suitable church edifice would add much strength to our work," James implored. James's words indicate that the problems he faced had two principle roots: On the one hand, systematic discrimination from the people in power limited the spread of Protestantism. On the other hand, the poor classes could not afford to convert to Protestantism and thus give up the benefits of the Catholic Church, which ran the charities in the city. The impoverished, dilapidated AME building simply could not compete.⁹²

The existence of black missionaries and their intentions and struggles to raise bilingual congregations in the southeast suggest that Mears's observations about the racial divisions in Dominican society were not as entrenched among some Dominicans, a handful of whom joined Goodin's, Wilson's, and James's Protestant churches. As late as 1910, James was still optimistic. "There is a future for the A.M.E. Church in this republic," he encouraged. "With a suitable church edifice at Santo Domingo City we could have in that city, in the midst of the deep-rooted Romanist institutions, a flourishing work."⁹³ Despite missionaries' tendencies toward optimism in order to secure funds, modern historians should consider seriously such declarations from African American missionaries whose opinions have too often been dismissed. If black ministers like James had received adequate financial support from abroad, it is possible that their bilingual work would have made inroads. The dark faces of African-descendant Protestant preachers could not have seemed too strange to poor Dominicans who had lived under Afro-Dominican president Heuraux's administration or had fought under black military leadership in the last century. Black missionaries like James, Goodin, and Wilson not only experienced this truism but foresaw its possibilities as they labored among the poorest sectors of Dominican society.

Yet, for white missionaries to see black missionaries as equals and suggest a missionary model in which black ministers led Dominican missionary stations funded by white denominations would have required them to express radical, even anachronistic, attitudes. In the early twentieth century, white supremacist attitudes led white clergy to generally ignore the marginal success of black ministers and to cling to what they knew to be true: only well-funded white missionary work could succeed in converting Dominicans to Protestantism. For this reason, Mears perceived the possible entry of other white denominations, like the American Methodist Episcopal Church, as a solution to the British Wesleyan Church's financial problems, while James viewed it as a threat. "The white Methodists from Porto Rico, the Moravians, and the Wesleyans from the neighboring islands are here looking over the field, ready to take the advantage

⁹²J. P. James, "A.M.E. Church Work at Samana, Santo Domingo," *Voice of Missions* 18, no. 2 (February 1910): 6–7.

⁹³James, "A.M.E. Church Work at Samana."

of the opportunities offered,” James warned in a letter to the AME missionary department in 1911.⁹⁴ He cautioned that without help from abroad, his impoverished congregation would lose its membership and the small progress the AME Church had made in the Dominican capital would regress.

V. White American Assessments: Plans for Occupancy via Puerto Rico

In early September 1911, Philo W. Drury and Nathan H. Huffman, American missionaries in Puerto Rico, surveyed the Dominican Republic on behalf of the interdenominational Evangelical Union of Puerto Rico. In their report, entitled “Occupancy of Santo Domingo by Evangelical Missions,” Drury and Huffman proposed that (white) American churches take a strong stand in favor of Dominican missions, which they perceived as an open Protestant missionary field. “It is in harmony with the facts to state that Protestant Christianity is not being fairly represented before the Dominican people,” they informed.⁹⁵ Beyond presenting the multiple reasons for American missions and the foreseen challenges, Drury and Huffman developed a “General Plan for Occupancy.” American missionary forces would enter the Dominican Republic via missionary work they were already doing in Puerto Rico, an island whose population shared the same Spanish language and “Latin race” as Dominicans.

Drury and Huffman’s report was the first step in an American ecumenical missionary movement in the Dominican Republic and it connected the country to similar activity in the Spanish Caribbean. Prior to the 1910s, a united U.S. missionary effort did not exist in the Caribbean. In Cuba and Puerto Rico, for example, U.S. denominations divided the islands into regional territories in order to limit competition between denominations. By 1910, however, missionaries’ local experiences and the inadequate attention paid to the region of Latin America at the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland inspired a new sense of ecumenical cooperation among American Protestants.⁹⁶ Interdenominational Protestant collaboration in Puerto Rico became a key goal of American missionaries, and ecumenical work on the island led white American and Puerto Rican pastors to discuss “the possibility of sending missionaries to their nearest neighbor, Santo Domingo.”⁹⁷ This interest motivated Drury and Huffman’s visit, which for the first time connected the Dominican Republic to the work of white American missionaries in Puerto Rico. Their report on the Dominican Republic thus fell in line with the general pattern of increased American evangelical activity in Latin America as the U.S. government’s influence expanded in the region.

When Drury and Huffman arrived in the Dominican Republic, the United States had already made its mark on the island’s politics. The missionaries perceived the United States’ involvement as a stabilizing force that made missionary work both feasible and urgent. Regarding the 1907 Dominican-American Convention, in which the

⁹⁴J. P. James, “Samaná, Santo Domingo, August 31, 1911,” *Voice of Missions* 19, no. 10 (October 1911): 10. The Moravians arrived in 1907 and built an iron church in San Pedro de Macoris.

⁹⁵Philo W. Drury and Nathan H. Huffman, “Occupancy of Santo Domingo by Evangelical Missions,” Latin American General Records 1911–1974, box 7, folder 11, Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University, N.Y.

⁹⁶Samuel Guy Inman, *Christian Cooperation in Latin America: Report of a Visit to Mexico, Cuba, and South America, March–October 1917* (New York: Committee on Cooperation in Latin America, 1917), 32.

⁹⁷Odell, *It Came to Pass*, 148. In 1911, the Presbyterian Church at Mayaguez, Puerto Rico donated \$170 for Dominican missionary work.

U.S. government assumed the public debt of the country and took over the custom-houses, Drury and Huffman observed: “This has given the country good financial credit, and at the same time has largely eliminated the possibility of the repetition of the revolutions that in the past have so frequently interrupted the progress of the country.” A “new era of political stability and material progress,” had been inaugurated, they argued, and the country could now turn to building its public infrastructure. During the Cáceres presidency, the Dominican government had repaired buildings and refurbished roads. Drury and Huffman noted the improvements, reporting: “The streets of the Capital and other cities are in excellent condition. Other public works of considerable importance are in the process of execution, and still larger plans are being laid for the future.” This progress, they believed, would make the Dominican people more willing to accept Protestantism, a religion that stood in opposition to the supposedly backward Catholic Church.⁹⁸

Like Mears, Drury and Huffman perceived Dominicans as forward thinking but held back by the Catholic Church, which was tightly aligned to national sentiment. “The Catholics have a strong hold on the country,” they explained. “The number of churches in the Capitol [*sic*] would indicate that they are a very religious people.” Indeed, Drury and Huffman noted the “close interlacing of religious and patriotic sentiments” by providing an example. On the Sunday that they spent in the capital, the authorities publicly displayed Christopher Columbus’s remains in the Cathedral where the remains of the founding fathers of the Dominican nation—Juan Pablo Duarte, Francisco del Rosario Sánchez, and Matías Ramón Mella—also rested. It seemed that nationalism and Catholicism were one in the same. The missionaries, however, blamed the Catholic Church for the “low standard of morals” that reminded them of the state of Puerto Rico and the Philippines before the United States had taken over governance and Protestant Christianity had supposedly improved the people. “Our observation of the practice of [Catholicism] in the Republic confirmed our impression that it is wholly inadequate to lead men to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ,” they underscored in their biased comparison of the country to Puerto Rico and the Philippines. Adherents to Protestant supremacy, they viewed the Catholic Church as nothing more than a cultural institution that did not spiritually uplift the people but instead limited the progress of the nation. The Catholic Church, they accused, “systematically [opposed] the introduction of modern civilization in Santo Domingo.”⁹⁹

According to Drury and Huffman, the changes already taking place on the island would advance Protestantism in the Dominican Republic. To this end, they noted: “There is complete religious freedom in the Republic” which would facilitate “a breaking away from the domination of the Catholic Church.” For proof of this potential shift, they turned to Dominican law, which prohibited clergy from protesting the liberty of worship. They also cited the “modernizing of the school system” as a development that demonstrated the country’s advancement. In 1911, there were 482 schools and 15,586 scholars across the nation. These factors indicated to Drury and Huffman that “the people of Santo Domingo have entered with determination on the struggle upward.” This perceived progress made the Dominican people “deserving of the best help, such as will come from the introduction of evangelical Christianity.” Drury and Huffman believed that introducing evangelical Christianity at a time when more people were seeking education and questioning the Catholic Church would prove

⁹⁸Drury and Huffman, “Occupancy of Santo Domingo.”

⁹⁹Drury and Huffman, “Occupancy of Santo Domingo.”

advantageous. By beginning missionary work in the country, American Protestants would be “getting into the current of improvements and progress, and thus grow up with the country.”¹⁰⁰ The apparently stable government under Cáceres seemed to them to signal a new era for the Dominican Republic which opened the country to American interests beyond the business and political spheres. By making these statements, Drury and Huffman tapped into American notions of the Protestant work ethic and racist imagery that infantilized the Caribbean region and depicted it as being in need of U.S. guidance. Such discourse masked the violence associated with the U.S. imperial enterprise and made it palatable for white America to dominate foreign territories politically, economically, and culturally.

Even so, Drury and Huffman noted that Protestant missions in the Dominican Republic would not be an easy pursuit. Besides the entrenched Catholic culture, the high cost of operation and anti-American sentiment posed two additional barriers to entry. In 1911, tariffs and the costs of traveling to and living in the Dominican Republic were higher than in Puerto Rico. The missionaries also noted that construction and maintenance costs for a church building would be “fifty to seventy percent more” than in Puerto Rico. On top of financial concerns, the American government had become increasingly unpopular in the Dominican Republic as it sought to protect American business interest in Santo Domingo and assumed control of the Dominican customhouses. This encroachment on Dominican sovereignty had “awaken[ed] antipathy in the minds of the Dominicans against the Americans.” Many Dominicans, Drury and Hoffman asserted, feared that the United States “may have designs against the political independence of the Republic” as had been the case in Puerto Rico. The U.S. Minister to Santo Domingo, William W. Russell, reassured the missionaries that anti-American sentiment was not universal. Yet the U.S. government’s constant intervention in Dominican politics and finances unnerved both Dominican elites and the larger public.¹⁰¹

To counter anti-American sentiment, the missionaries suggested a “General Plan for Occupancy” that took advantage of the historical, lingual, and racial ties between the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. The two islands had a long history of connections throughout the nineteenth century when political exiles from either island took refuge on the other. More recently, the sugar industry had led to a mass migration of Puerto Ricans to the Dominican southeast.¹⁰² The missionaries suggested that “at least 15,000 Puerto Ricans [live] in Santo Domingo,” employed on sugar plantations. Unlike black Anglophone Protestant cane workers from the greater Caribbean, these Spanish-speaking migrants usually worked higher-skilled jobs on the plantation. While in the Dominican southeast, Drury and Huffman saw a number of people whom they had known in Puerto Rico. The Puerto Ricans “invariably greeted us with great cordiality, and many expressed their desire to see evangelical missions opened in Santo Domingo,” they preened. Based on this relationship, the Americans would already have a base for their evangelical operations, and Drury and Huffman suggested that Protestant churches in the Dominican Republic could first serve Puerto Ricans. These churches would then attract Dominicans, Drury and Huffman argued, because “the inhabitants of the two islands are of the same race, with like customs and language.” The perceived racial and lingual tie between Puerto Ricans and

¹⁰⁰Drury and Huffman, “Occupancy of Santo Domingo.”

¹⁰¹Drury and Huffman, “Occupancy of Santo Domingo.”

¹⁰²Hoetink, *Dominican People*, 29–32.

Dominicans “would help to overcome prejudice, and would induce the Dominicans to attend the services.” By convincing the Dominican people that Protestant evangelical Christianity belonged as much to their “race” as it did to the white American and black Anglophone migrants in their midst, the Puerto Rican connection would demonstrate that American missions had nothing to do with the U.S. government’s intervention.¹⁰³

Economic incentives also facilitated the link between Puerto Rican and Dominican missions. Considering the physical proximity of the two islands, Drury and Huffman proposed that Dominican missions be administered as “an extension” of Puerto Rican missions. They pointed to the fact that the two islands are only fifty-five miles apart at their nearest point, and “the time required to travel between the two islands varies from fourteen to twenty-four hours.” They also cited the fact that at least five steamships ran monthly, connecting San Juan, Ponce, and Mayaguez to different Dominican ports. The traffic between the two islands would make it easy for Dominican missions to be administered in Puerto Rico. “This would result in economy in administration,” they reasoned. Moreover, if the two fields were under one administration, the same training institutions and Spanish-language print materials, such as church newspapers and evangelical pamphlets, could be used on both islands, further reducing the costs of operation. The Dominican link to Puerto Rico thus proved the most logical and economical route, especially since the ecumenical movement in the United States and Puerto Rico would provide a vast source of monetary funds through their various missionary boards.¹⁰⁴

The American missionaries also believed that forging ecumenical cooperation among white denominations would prove more successful than the missionary work already established on the island. In their visit to the capital, Drury and Huffman had come across James’s and Goodin’s congregations. They did not note anything about these churches other than that they were “small” and had “colored pastors.” “There is work of a similar character in three or four other points of the republic,” they imparted, most likely referring to Wilson’s congregation in San Pedro de Macorís and the British Wesleyan Church’s work in the north (despite the fact that Wesleyan missionaries were white). These underfunded efforts, they noted, could not evangelize Dominicans because of their poverty and close contact with black Anglophone migrants. The only other denomination that Drury and Huffman mentioned was the Moravian Church which had organized in San Pedro de Macorís. The two American missionaries believed that “this Church,” like the others, “will limit its activities to the English-speaking negro population.” Like Mears, Drury and Huffman cited the contact that current Protestant missionaries had with black Anglophone migrants as a detriment. “The relations that the English-speaking negro and Dominican maintain are such as to put without the realm of possibility the evangelization of the Dominicans by the agencies now at work, even [if] they were sufficiently well equipped,” they stressed. From their viewpoint, efforts to evangelize Dominicans had been “of an independent character, and in the main unsuccessful.” Considering the lack of funds dedicated to Protestant missionary work in the Dominican Republic and the poor state of missionary stations across the country, Drury and Huffman suggested that only white American missionaries and their Puerto Rican partners could accurately represent Protestantism to the Dominican people.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³Drury and Huffman, “Occupancy of Santo Domingo.”

¹⁰⁴Drury and Huffman, “Occupancy of Santo Domingo.”

¹⁰⁵Drury and Huffman, “Occupancy of Santo Domingo.”

VI. Conclusion

Two months after Drury and Huffman made their report, the Dominican president Ramón Cáceres was assassinated, and the period of political stability that lasted during his presidency abruptly ended. The war that ensued led white American Protestants to postpone their plans for missions. It was not until 1916, when the United States invaded the Dominican Republic and established a military occupation, that white American missionaries in Puerto Rico renewed their interest in the Dominican Republic. That year, the ecumenical board of the Evangelical Union in Puerto Rico (EUPR) voted to raise the question of Dominican missions to various church boards in the United States.¹⁰⁶ At the same time, the Foreign Missionary Conference of North America organized an ecumenical conference in Panama that examined Latin American and Caribbean countries in order to prepare for large-scale missionary work in the region.¹⁰⁷ Consequently, white American church leaders formed the ecumenical Committee on Cooperation in Latin America (CCLA). Together the CCLA and the EUPR led to the founding of the Board for Christian Work in Santo Domingo, which in 1922 established the Iglesia Evangélica Dominicana (IED), the first ecumenical white-led Protestant church on the island commissioned to target the Dominican people in the Spanish language.¹⁰⁸ In the lead up to the IED's founding, church leaders reread and cited Drury and Huffman's 1911 report in addition to other surveys of the island. The evangelical plan that they had developed—in which U.S. Protestant missions would spread to the Dominican Republic by way of Puerto Rico—had finally come to fruition.

In fact, Drury and Huffman's 1911 survey of the Dominican Republic "was the beginning of [a] new approach" that clearly identified Latin America as the new target of American evangelism and served as a cultural parallel to U.S. government's action in the region.¹⁰⁹ Going forward, the white missionary establishment fully embraced the idea of a racial divide between Dominicans and black Anglophone migrants. Consequently, Protestant missions proceeded on that basis in subsequent years and helped to bolster the claims that high-class Dominicans of European descent had made about Dominicans' cultural (and racial) whiteness in prior decades. American ecumenical Protestant groups categorized the Dominican Republic with other Spanish-speaking Latin American nations in their meeting minutes, reports, budgets, and missionary plans. When the British Wesleyan Church finally gave up its Dominican missions in 1931, it handed its church property over to the IED. The prior nineteenth-century links to Haiti and the British Caribbean through black congregations continued to exist at the margins of society, but by the late 1910s, few people in the international community, least of all missionaries, would group the Dominican Republic among the "black republics" of the world.

¹⁰⁶Odell, *It Came to Pass*, 148.

¹⁰⁷All of these organizations and conferences were related. The Foreign Missionary Conference of North America was held in New York and led to another meeting, the Panama Conference, in 1916. The Puerto Rico regional conference developed from the Panama Conference and was also held in 1916. At this conference, the Evangelical Union of Puerto Rico, a body that consisted of nine denominations working in Puerto Rico at the time, was formally established. The Committee on Cooperation in Latin America was then established in 1917. See Inman, *Christian Cooperation in Latin America*, 32.

¹⁰⁸"Outline of Cooperative Work in Puerto Rico and Santo Domingo," Records of the Foreign Missionary Society of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, folder 2279-5-6:07, General Commission on Archives and History, United Methodist Church, Madison, N.J.

¹⁰⁹Odell, *It Came to Pass*, 148. For "Latin race," see Inman, *Christian Cooperation in Latin America*, 6.

Protestants operating in the Dominican Republic during 1905–1911, however, did not know of the changes to come in the post-Cáceres period. In the first decade of the twentieth century, they speculated about the future and considered the “peculiar conditions that prevailed” in the country. White North Atlantic ministers called for missions on the Spanish-speaking eastern side of Hispaniola by emphasizing the racial division between Dominicans and black migrants. Black ministers’ bilingual congregations suffered from the lack of support and became increasingly homogenized and marginalized, operating only among the black Anglophone Protestant communities on the island. Cut off from the ecumenical organization of white denominations in the 1910s, these bilingual congregations faded from historical accounts of Protestantism in the Spanish Caribbean. As church historian Edward Odell asserted, incorrectly, in 1952: “The Wesleyans . . . were respected and loved for their exemplary lives and their devoted service among the people on the north shore, but no work had been done along the southern shore, in the capital, or in the west.”¹¹⁰

The idea of the Dominican Republic as a blank slate for Protestant missionary work was based on a perceived racial distinction between Dominicans and black Anglophone peoples. African-descendant missionaries did not take such distinctions for granted. Indeed, the history of Protestant missions in the Dominican Republic elucidates the tensions between traditional racist lines of thought and radically different visions of the future based on the black evangelical experience. The heretofore unrecognized history of black-led, mixed-ethnic bilingual Protestant congregations in the Dominican Republic reveals important contradictions in the historical record on Caribbean race and religion.¹¹¹ It additionally shows that racial distinctions within both religious spaces and secular society at times required purposeful construction. Black-led bilingual congregations existed as an alternative model of Protestant missionary work that linked the Dominican Republic to the African diaspora. The association between Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic after 1911 emphasized another racial alternative: the Latin race.

Acknowledgments. I would like to recognize and thank the Schomburg Center and the General Commission on Archives and History of the United Methodist Church for research grants that enabled this work. I additionally express my deepest thanks to leaders of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Iglesia Evangélica Dominicana, and the Episcopal Church in the Dominican Republic for support of this work. Other groups and individuals have provided invaluable feedback: the outside reviewers and the editors of *Church History*, the Haiti-DR section of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA), the group of scholars who workshoped papers in Caribbean Studies at the National Humanities Center in 2017–2018, and my LASA 2016 co-panelists and panel chair Jason Dormandy who first read this article in conference paper form. Thank you all.

¹¹⁰Odell, *It Came to Pass*, 152.

¹¹¹For my use of contradictions, see García-Peña, *Borders of Dominicanidad*, 1–2.

Cite this article: Davidson, Christina Cecelia. “Redeeming Santo Domingo: North Atlantic Missionaries and the Racial Conversion of a Nation.” *Church History* 89, no. 1 (March 2020): 74–100. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640720000013>.