Converting Spanish Hispaniola:
Race, Nation, and the AME Church in Santo Domingo, 1872-1904
by
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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in the
Department of History in the
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2017
ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This dissertation employs a diasporic framework to study the intersections of race, religion, and nationalism in Dominican society. It argues that in a country where elites have used state power and historiography to define national identity as Catholic, Spanish, and white, Protestant history reveals non-Catholic religious ties between Dominicans, African Americans, Haitians, and West Indians and offers a counter framework for understanding the Dominican Republic within the African Diaspora. Using church records, newspapers, and court cases, it examines the biographies of Afro-descended religious leaders, tracing their movements throughout the Caribbean and the United States at the end of the nineteenth century. It reveals how African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans imagined themselves, interacted with each other, and articulated various racial, religious, and political identities. Ultimately, this dissertation demonstrates that black Protestants’ religious beliefs provided an ideological basis for Afro-diasporic endeavors such as AME missions in the Caribbean. Despite these ties, anti-American sentiment in the Dominican Republic, poverty among black migrants, and public scandal limited the growth of black Protestantism in the Dominican Republic. These factors resulted in the social marginalization of the diasporic black church.
Dedication

Para Margarito y Ludovina. Y para toda la familia AME dominicana del pasado, presente y porvenir.
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Beyond North Carolina, I am deeply indebted to the librarians and staff at the Schomburg Center of New York, the Burke Library at Columbia University, the General Commission on Archives and History of the United Methodist Church, and the Fellow’s Program of the Global Foundation for Democracy and Development. In the Dominican Republic, the staff at the Archivo General de la Nación provided invaluable assistance. I am especially grateful to Raymundo González, Salvador Alfau, Martha Ellen Davis, Bienvenido Alvarez, Benjamín Silva, and José Guerrero, who took the time to meet with me and share their knowledge and resources. I am also grateful to the ministers and members of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the Iglesia Evangélica Dominicana in the Dominican Republic. I could not have done it without you.
A decade has passed since I first traveled to the Dominican Republic in 2007, where I lived in Santo Domingo for seven months. During that time, my life revolved around two spheres of Dominican society. I spent my weekdays interviewing sex workers and interning at the United Nation’s Institute for the Research and Advancement of Women (INSTRAW).¹ I spent my weekends singing hymns in a small evangelical church on Calle José Martí. The sign painted above the door of the church read “Iglesia A. Metodista Episcopal, Nuevo Betel Inc.” and had the familiar picture of a cross and an anvil. Having spent my childhood attending an African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in the United States, I was surprised to learn that the AME Church was first established on the island of Hispaniola in 1824, when over six thousand African Americans immigrated to Haiti. As I became more involved in this small religious community, my intellectual interests shifted from the sex industry to the evangelical church. I began to wonder, “If what I had learned in the United States was true—that Dominicans shun their African heritage and the country’s ties to Haiti, and

¹ This work culminated in my senior thesis for the Latin American Studies major at Yale University. Christina C. Davidson, “Combating Repressive Ideologies and Social Marginalization through Public Education: An Analysis of Dominican Sex Worker Advocacy Groups’ Political Discourse and Print Literature” (undergraduate thesis, Yale University, 2009).
instead proudly claim their Spanish-Catholic ancestry—why did this self-conscious black Protestant denomination still exist in Santo Domingo?"

To answer this question, I began research on the AME Church in the Dominican Republic in May of 2008, five months after I returned to the United States. Back then there were few accounts and no books written on the 1824-1826 emigration.² There were similarly few written histories regarding the large group of emigrants' descendants still residing in Samaná, the northeastern peninsula of the Dominican Republic.³ Consequently, my foray into the church's history began with a conversation with the former AME sojourner missionary to the Dominican Republic, John Thomas III, and a trip to the island to interview elderly church members in Samaná.⁴ While in the country,

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⁴ The AME Church no longer has a missionary department. The Sojourner program was founded in 1997 and is run by the Women’s Missionary Society. The program supports members of the church who wish to conduct service work for short durations in Africa, South America, and the Caribbean. Dorothy Adams
I also attend the AME Sixteenth District Planning Meeting, the first one held on Dominican soil. My discussions with Mr. Thomas and church elders introduced me to the history and contemporary political dynamics within the diasporic church. My experience at the District Planning Meeting alerted me to the fact that the answer to my original question could not be found in studying oral history alone; nor could the apparent contradiction of the Dominican AME Church be explained away by the abbreviated “A” on the façade of Nuevo Betel. The long history of the Dominican AME Church is more complex than the way it is typically discussed among American and Dominican church members. Similarly, Dominican racial ideology—especially as it is expressed within AME spaces—cannot be summed up as a total rejection of blackness.

This dissertation is a first attempt to address some of the complexities of AME history in the Dominican Republic. In it, I challenge common understandings of said history by focusing on a distinct region and period: Santo Domingo in the late

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5 The meeting was held May 21-23, 2008 in Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic. I detail this meeting briefly in my second senior thesis produced at Yale University and later published in the AME Church Review. Christina C. Davidson, “A History of the AME Church and the African American Immigrant Community of Samaná, Dominican Republic,” AME Church Review 125, no. 415 (August 1, 2009): 28.

nineteenth-century (1872-1904). Instead of asking why the AME Church exists in the
Dominican Republic, I focus on how and what. I answer two principle questions, “How
did the AME Church come to exist in Santo Domingo City in the late nineteenth
century?” And, “What does this history reveal about late nineteenth century Afro-
diasporic relationships in the circum-Caribbean?” In order to answer the first question, I
examine the biographies of principle missionary leaders, the institutional history of the
AME Church, the political and national milieu of the period, the transnational exchange
of ideas among AME Church leaders, and the movement of AME preachers across the
Caribbean. To answer the second question, I analyze specific debates and Afro-diasporic
conflicts among AME leaders, including a damaging lawsuit that took place in Santo
Domingo in 1890.

Black Protestantism, and Dominican Protestant history more broadly, are
understudied subjects in the Dominican Republic. Yet, my findings suggest that further
research on Protestantism could transform common understandings of Dominican
religious history. In 2014, I had the privilege of meeting Sr. Salvador Alfau, one of the
directors of the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN) in Santo Domingo, who warned me
that I would likely find very little on Protestantism in the national archive. “The
Dominican Republic is a Catholic country,” he told me. He was correct, of course, in his
characterization of the historical relationship between the Dominican state and the
Catholic Church. Catholicism has been the state religion for centuries, and Dominicans
have traditionally conflated national identity with religion. But fortunately, I did find something. Benefitting from the AGN’s recent overhaul and digitization of its inventory, I came across the 1890 lawsuit mentioned above. The dispute, which involved two AME ministers and passed through all three branches of Dominican government, was never mentioned to me in all my years of interviewing elderly church members. Nor have I found descriptions of it elsewhere. Yet, this lawsuit illuminates the history of Dominican Protestantism in critical ways. Though it is ostensibly a fight about AME Church property, the contents of the lawsuit demonstrate how some Dominican Protestants rejected the diasporic AME denomination in favor of a non-Catholic, Protestant national identity. The legal documents also provide insight on Dominican law, governance, and anti-imperial resistance at the end of the nineteenth century. While this lawsuit is indeed unique, it suggests that Dominican Protestants had their own way of conceptualizing their place within the nation.

Ever since coming across the lawsuit, I have oriented my research towards the nineteenth century historical milieu in which it took place. Nevertheless, I am optimistic that this dissertation will begin the work of connecting the past to the present. In this respect, my ideas about the diasporic AME Church have derived as much from my own experiences within the church as they do from archival research. Since my first trip to Santo Domingo in 2007, my life has been shaped by the tension of living in diaspora, as I have traveled constantly back and forth between the United States and the Dominican
Republic to study the AME Church. In the process, I have facilitated diasporic relationships within the church by acting as an interpreter, translating documents, and even leading African American AME visitors around the island on one occasion.\(^7\)

Despite the complications of assuming an insider-outsider relationship with my research subject, I believe that my own positionality within the church has enhanced my research rather than diminished it. I hope that this dissertation will illuminate ways in which the tension of living in diaspora was formulated, experienced, and actively practiced over a century ago. With regard to the present, I hope that my research will disrupt a long history of silence surrounding the first Dominican Protestants in Santo Domingo and their ties to Dominican government, civil society, and the broader African diaspora at the end of the nineteenth century.

\(^7\) The visit took place in 2011 under the leadership of Rev. Sidney Williams of Bethel AME Church in Morristown, New Jersey.
Introduction

In 1888, a proposal to eliminate the word *African* from the name of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church appeared in the *AME Church Review*, the denomination’s quarterly academic journal. The author of the essay, H.C.C. Astwood, gave two primary reasons for this controversial suggestion. First, he asserted that the term *African* was no longer necessary since black people in the United States could claim American citizenship under the Fourteenth Amendment. He believed that African Americans should work towards racial equality as Americans first. Second, he was concerned that the racially specific term contradicted the AME denomination’s universal Christian message and stymied church growth abroad. As U.S. consul to the Dominican Republic and superintendent of the AME Church’s mission in Santo Domingo, Astwood was especially worried about AME foreign missions in the Dominican capital. His proposal evidences one way that concern over the Dominican Republic—and the Caribbean more broadly— Influenced broader debates about national belonging, racial unity, and foreign mission within the AME Church.¹

The history of AME missions in Santo Domingo demonstrates the centrality of the Caribbean region to AME leaders’ ideas about national belonging, racial unity, and the early development of AME foreign missions. As slavery was eradicated across the

¹ H.C.C. Astwood, “Shall the Name of the African Methodist Episcopal Church Be Changed to That of the Allen Methodist Episcopal Church?,” *AME Church Review* 4, no. 3 (1888): 317–23.
Western hemisphere, the paradox of de jure citizenship for blacks and the de facto reality of continued black oppression forced African descendants in the Americas to theorize their position vis-à-vis emerging nation-states. While some people, like Astwood, argued that African descendants should assume a national, non-racialized identity, other people promoted racial unity in opposition to the ideology of white supremacy. Within the AME Church, the issue of foreign missions was a microcosm of this polemic. Although American AME leaders ultimately pursued an Afro-diasporic project through foreign missions, the purpose and goals of missions were contested in the 1880s and early 1890s when the Caribbean region represented the majority of the denomination’s missionary outposts.

This dissertation is about the formation of AME missions in the Dominican Republic from 1872-1904. But it is also about broader transnational debates regarding national belonging and racial unity. As African American leaders theorized and enacted foreign missions in the Caribbean, they considered the future of the black race within both national and Pan-African frameworks. The case of Santo Domingo reveals that such debates were not held in the United States alone. African descendants in the Dominican

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Republic, Haiti, and the British Caribbean had their own ideas about foreign missions and reactions to racial oppression. The history of the AME church in Santo Domingo shows how the imaginations and realities of race, nation, and black political belonging in the Caribbean both converged and conflicted with African American ideas and experiences. These dynamics directed the trajectory of the AME denomination and the local development of Protestantism in the Dominican Republic and the broader Caribbean.

**Historical Background: AME Foreign Missions in an Era of Transformation**

The history of the AME Church in the Dominican Republic began when over six thousand African descendants emigrated from the United States to Haiti in the early 1820s. Many of those who emigrated were members or affiliates of the AME Church, the first independent black church in the United States. Invited to the island by the Haitian President, Jean Pierre Boyer, the emigrants were granted Haitian citizenship upon their arrival in the Black Republic. While many of the emigrants later returned to the United States, those who stayed formed small communities and Protestant congregations in various regions of the island, including territories that later became part of the Dominican Republic.³

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Today, twenty-nine AME congregations exist in the Dominican Republic. These congregations are the product of a second wave of AME activity on the island of Hispaniola that took place in the late nineteenth century. Sometime after 1830, the AME Church lost connection with former African Methodists emigrants operating in Hispaniola. It was not until the 1870s and early 1880s, when diplomatic relations between the Dominican Republic and the United States intensified, that the connection was reestablished. During this later period, African American AME leaders began plans for foreign missionary work. The AME Church was officially established in Haiti in 1873 and Santo Domingo in 1882. That year, U.S. Consul H.C.C. Astwood helped descendants of African American emigrants in Santo Domingo affiliate with the AME Church. In joining the AME Church, these emigrant descendants soon found themselves at the intersection of competing racial, national, and religious identities. Their experiences and the broader dynamics of AME foreign missions in late nineteenth century history are crucial for understanding both historical and contemporary manifestations of African Methodism in the Dominican Republic, the broader Caribbean, and North America.4

Recently scholars have considered the year 1865 to be a watershed moment in Western history that instigated drastic changes in geopolitics and the prevailing social

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order across the Americas. In the United States, the end of the Civil War in 1865 consolidated the Union; altered race relations with the passage of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments; and instituted a new period of American expansionism abroad. Following the American Civil War, the Confederation of Canada in 1867 terminated British rule on the continent of North America and was in many ways a direct response to the United States’ war and expansionist schemes. In the Caribbean, violent social unrest prevailed in the 1865 Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica, the Dominican War of Restoration (1863-1865), and the Ten Years War in Cuba (1868-1878). Despite their varied goals and rates of success, these events marked resistance to the established colonial regimes. Similarly, in Latin America, the French intervention in Mexico (1862-1867), the Chincha Islands War (1864-1866), the War of the Triple Alliance (1865-1870), and the ongoing battles between liberal and conservative politics in the 1860s signaled a new phase of nation-state building and boundary wars in the region. These events of the 1860s were succeeded by rapid industrialization, advances in

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5 D.H. Doyle, ed., American Civil Wars: The United States, Latin America, Europe, and the Crisis of the 1860s (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017). This perspective was also presented in a recent call for papers entitled, “1865 and The Disenchantment of Empire,” that was publicized by the Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora (ASWAD). Phanuel Antwi and Ronald Cummings to ASWAD mailing list, November 21, 2016, http://myemail.constantcontact.com/November-21--2016---Announcements.html?soid=1103777415737&aid=yWf_w870IQM.
7 Specific liberal-conservative battles include the Colombian Civil War (1860-62) and the Federal War in Venezuela (1859-63).
technology and communication, hemispheric abolition, and more wars and rebellions, marking an age of revolution and transformation.

For African descendants in the United States and the Dominican Republic specifically, the year 1865 ushered in a period that was both hopeful and discouraging. With the end of the American Civil War and the Dominican War of Restoration, both countries made attempts towards reconstruction that changed the lives of African descendants in various ways. In the United States, African Americans gained citizenship rights and black males gained voting rights under the Reconstruction amendments. These rights led to the election of a select few black men to government positions. In the Dominican Republic, black men, including the military general Ulises Heureaux, had risen their social standing through their participation in the war; Heureaux, the son of a Haitian man and a West Indian woman, was elected president in 1882. Yet, hope was tempered by the realization that the end of war did not abolish hegemonic racism. In the United States, the rise of white supremacist groups, terrorism against black people, and Jim Crow laws mitigated the progress achieved during the early years of Reconstruction. In the Dominican Republic, old racial hierarchies reemerged after the War of Restoration. So did anti-haitianism, annexationism, and political violence. Meanwhile continued black oppression from Canada to South America prevailed. For African

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descendants in the United States, the Dominican Republic, and across the hemisphere, a new social order remained a distant dream.

The AME Church is one space in which African descendants’ responses to the hope and despair of the era came to light. In the late nineteenth century, the AME Church developed into an internationally recognized black institution. Like the U.S. government, the AME Church experienced drastic institutional changes post 1865. Membership in the church grew exponentially as the denomination expanded to the American south and west. Organizational structures such as the missionary and finance departments were established and reorganized in the 1860s-70s, and AME leaders began plans for further expansion abroad. By the 1880s, the AME Church was the premier black Methodist organization in the world. One bishop bragged, “Few people realize the strength of the African Methodist church in the United States. We have about 500,000 communicants, nine bishops, and between 2,000 and 3,000 pastors.” 9 The bishop also listed the AME publishing house, multiple universities and colleges, the missionary society, and the Haitian missionary station among the denomination’s many accomplishments. 10

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10 For more on the AME Church development during this period see Daniel Payne, History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (Nashville, TN: Publishing House of the AME Sunday School Union, 1891); Richard R. Wright, Centennial Encyclopaedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (Philadelphia: Book Concern of the AME Church, 1916).
The strength of the AME institution in the United States amplified the voices of its leaders who published their opinions about race relations, national and international politics, and foreign missions in the AME newspaper, the Christian Recorder. In the 1870s-1890s, the topic of AME foreign missions occupied a discursive space in which opinions about these subjects converged. AME leaders believed that their future was tied to that of the whole black race, and they advocated for civil rights and racial uplift both at home and abroad. Foreign missions were an important part of advocacy since AME leaders believed that Protestant conversion would promote racial uplift and counter racist stereotypes of black people. Thus, foreign missions enabled AME leaders to simultaneously pursue their Christian duty to evangelize non-Christians and work towards racial uplift. Leaders also believed that it would increase the denomination’s prestige, which would further demonstrate the capabilities of the black race.

In the 1870s and early 1880s, the island of Hispaniola—specifically Haiti—was the main site of missionary activity for the AME Church. As scholars such as Léon Pamphile, Millery Polyné, and most recently Brandon Byrd have shown, Haiti was at the

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11 I use the term *racial uplift* throughout this dissertation to refer to an elite African American discourse through which African Americans expressed the idea that they could advance the black race through education, social welfare, and personal achievement.

center of African American diasporic imaginations in the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{13} Mindful that white people believed that Haiti’s ongoing civil wars proved black people’s unsuitability for governance, African Americans committed themselves to supporting political stability in the black Republic.\textsuperscript{14} Protestant missions were among the strategies used to “civilize” Haiti, and the AME Church played a prominent role in establishing Protestant missions in Port-au-Prince. As the AME Church’s first missionary station, Haiti held symbolic importance over the Dominican Republic. This outlook directed the church’s missionary priorities; Haiti received more financial support and media press than the Dominican Republic in the 1880s and 1890s. Throughout this period and into the twentieth century, Haiti continued to hold a symbolic place of importance above its neighbor.

Despite the significance of the Haitian mission, this dissertation focuses on the AME Church’s Santo Domingo mission founded in 1882. Dominican AME history provides important insights into how Caribbean ideas about national belonging, racial unity, and foreign missions intersected with African American ideas within the AME Church. Descendants of African American emigrants residing in Santo Domingo in the


late nineteenth century were committed to rebuilding the Dominican nation in light of the anticolonial, anti-racist ideals touted during the War of Restoration. In the 1880s and 90s, American imperialism, not Jim Crow, represented the greatest threat to this project. Thus, some Dominican African Methodists were wary of the AME Church’s missionary endeavors, which they perceived as inherently linked to American intervention in the country. They were not alone. The story of the Santo Domingo AME congregation is intricately linked to the history of the AME Church in Haiti, the British and Dutch Caribbean, and North America. Beyond the Dominican Republic—in Haiti, British Guiana, Saint Thomas, and even the United States and Canada—African Methodists debated the purpose and perceived “imperialist” intentions of AME foreign missions. The history of the AME Church in Santo Domingo exposes these broad connections and ideological debates.

**Historiography: Dominican Protestantism in Diaspora and in Nation**

Despite the endurance of the AME Church in the Dominican Republic, only a handful of books and articles have addressed the denomination’s history, and none have discussed the late nineteenth-century history that I present in this dissertation. Indeed,

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previous publications range on the extent to which they engage AME history at all. Such works generally fall into three categories: those that discuss the 1824-1826 Haitian emigration movement and detail the AME Church’s involvement in that movement;¹⁶ those that focus on the community of African American descendants residing in Samaná, some of whom are AME members;¹⁷ and those that focus on Dominican Protestant history, including the seminal role of the AME Church.¹⁸ Although this varied body of literature exists, few works have focused solely on the AME Church as the


subject of analysis. In fact, prior to 2015, only George A. Lockward had intentionally studied the Dominican AME Church’s institutional history. In the past two years, one documentary film by Alanna Lockward, the granddaughter of George A. Lockward, and two of my own articles have also focused directly on the AME Church.

The significance of George A. Lockward’s *El Protestantismo en Dominicana* (1976) cannot be understated. Lockward was the first person to write about AME Church history as part of Dominican Protestant history. Other histories of Dominican Protestantism have followed, but these studies tend to focus on specific denominations.

Lockward’s work takes on greater importance in the present day.

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19 In 2003, Humberto García Muñiz and Jorge L. Giovannetti published an article on Garveyism and Anglophone Caribbean churches, including the AME Church, in San Pedro de Macoris. While their work provides key insights into AME history, I do not include it here because its focus is on Garveyism and not the institution of the AME Church. Humberto García Muñiz and Jorge L. Giovannetti, “Garveyismo y racismo en el Caribe: El caso de la población cocola en la República Dominicana,” *Caribbean Studies* 31, no. 1 (January 1, 2003): 139–211.


because of the increased visibility of Dominican evangelicals in politics and society. As a result of the Pentecostal boom that has swept across Latin America, Africa, and Asia, Dominican evangelicals represent over twenty-three percent of the Dominican population. Yet, besides a few exceptions, histories of Dominican Protestantism has not advanced much beyond Lockward’s 1976 study.

I believe that the exponential growth in Protestantism makes the study of Dominican Protestant history urgent. As I demonstrate elsewhere, histories of Dominican Protestantism tend to reproduce a longue-durée timeline, connecting current day manifestations of Pentecostalism to the first 1824-1826 Protestant migrants. Yet, I argue that Dominican Protestantism is better understood in terms of periods or multiple origin points. In this dissertation, I demonstrate that organized foreign missionary activity between 1872 and 1904 was characterized by the establishment of black-led

but includes published books that are easily accessible in the United States and the Dominican Republic. Other histories are likely to exist in the form of unpublished manuscripts on the island.


25 Christina C. Davidson, “Understanding the Past, Navigating the Present: Two Historical Protestant Churches within the Modern Dominican Evangelical Sphere” (Fellows Program, Global Foundation for Democracy and Development, forthcoming).
congregations in the Dominican capital, San Pedro de Macorís, and Samaná. Contrary to popular thought, black preachers in the southeast did not only aim to convert black Anglophone migrants, but also preached in Spanish in order to convert poor Spanish-speaking Dominicans; their efforts were met with limited success. The periodization of Dominican Protestant history is useful insofar as it clearly reveals Afro-Caribbean contributions. It also clearly demonstrates that Protestant religious spaces became racially and ethnically segregated in the early twentieth century. Thus, periodization disrupts a non-racialized understanding of Dominican Protestant history. It is my hope that periodization will also encourage deeper historical investigation of Dominican Protestantism.

Regarding the AME Church specifically, both Alanna Lockward’s recent documentary, her forthcoming dissertation, and my articles on the subject emphasize the significance of the Dominican AME Church’s historic and present links to the African Diaspora. For her part, Alanna Lockward has examined the black ideologies that led to the formation of the AME Church outside of the United States. She links manifestations of African Methodism in the Dominican Republic to African American, Haitian, and Namibian history, demonstrating the global reach of the black church. In my articles, I have focused on how diasporic ties to the African American church

26 Ibid.
27 I discuss the barriers to their work in the epilogue.
affected the development of the AME Church in the Dominican Republic as well as current-day understandings of race within the church. Dominican AME Church history is inherently transnational and national in scope, and both its history of Afro-diasporic connections as well as its history of adaptation within Dominican society must be taken into account.

The Afro-diasporic dimensions of this thesis demonstrate how African descendants in the Dominican Republic, the United States, Haiti, and the British Caribbean participated in cross-border debates regarding national belonging, racial unity, and AME missions. Scholars, such as Lorand Matory, Percy C. Hintzen, and Jean Muteba Rahier have provided useful metaphors to understand the “dialogue” and “frictions” that takes place when distinct groups within the African diaspora come into relationship with one another. The constant dialogue between people of the African diaspora is also readily apparent in works by myriad scholars. I argue that the AME


Church in the Dominican Republic was one manifestation of these larger processes, in which diaspora was forged, contested, and reimagined along ideological and regional divides. Although this dissertation centers on the Dominican Republic, the imagined ties and physical relationships between African Methodists across North America and the Caribbean remain a key focus. The collaborations and disagreements that occurred among distinct Afro-diasporic groups within the Dominican AME Church cannot be fully understood without the perspective of similar debates taking place in North America, Haiti, and the British Caribbean.

At the same time, the history of the AME Church in Santo Domingo is unmistakably a Dominican story. Thus, I am also invested in writing AME history as part of Dominican history and advancing Dominican historiography. The termination of my thesis comes at a critical moment when scholars of the Dominican Republic are increasingly producing innovative studies of Dominican racial ideology. Recent publications by Lorgia Garcia, Milagros Ricourt, Anne Eller, April Mayes, Edward Paulino, Raj Chetty and Amaury Rodríguez—all published within the last three years—have challenged the racist, anti-Haitian narratives written and popularized by the elite Dominican class.30 Only Mayes’s work, however, directly overlaps with the time period

that I study, while Eller’s social history of the War of Restoration provides necessary historical background. Besides this new body of literature, older scholarly works published in English and Spanish, such as works by Teresita Martínez-Vergne, Cyrus Veeser, Henry Hoetink, Mu-Kein Sang, and Wenceslao Vega provide crucial insight on the late nineteenth-century period. However, they do not provide great detail on Dominican law and governance during the dictatorship of Ulises Heureaux (1882-84, 1887, 1889-1899). It is my hope that this dissertation will lay the ground work for future studies of Dominican society and Dominican-American relations during the Heureaux dictatorship. Such work will continue the recent tradition of dismantling anti-Haitian/anti-black narratives and connecting regional and national Dominican history to the circum-Caribbean and the broader African Diaspora.

**Methods: Reconstructing the AME Diaspora**

As with many histories of the African Diaspora, the historical oppression of African descendant people has produced silences in the archive. The lack of primary source materials, the incomplete state of such materials, and the practice of ignoring

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black history in mainstream historiography makes it difficult to analyze and write history. Thus, like other scholars who study the African diaspora, I am concerned with the production of history and understanding alternative ways that African descendants produced historical narrative. For example, scholars of Afro-Caribbean religion have shown how African descendants formed their own ways of conceptualizing, creating, and passing on history to the next generation. Such stories were at times written, but often they were embodied in oral communication practices (ie. speech, song, stories), religion, art, and dance. In this dissertation I engage with multiple strategies to address the silences in the archive. Responding to recent academic discussions regarding scale, I have altered between transnational, national, institutional and biographical scales of analysis in order to reconstruct the history of the AME Church in Santo Domingo. At the transnational, institutional, and biographical levels, my analysis is not fixed by national boundaries; I focus on Dominican, African American, Haitian, Canadian, and British Caribbean stories. At the local scale of Santo Domingo, I am concerned with how narrative is produced through law, governance, and patronage networks.


Beyond theory, my methodology is informed by the sources at my disposal. More often than not, the sources have been scattered and fragmented, reflecting the subaltern status of the individuals and institution that I am studying. The main primary sources that I engage with include newspaper sources, court records, and the U.S. consular dispatches from Santo Domingo. When writing biographies, I also rely upon shipping records, census data, and marriage records. The state of the data has prevented me from analyzing the everyday experiences and religious expression of Dominican African Methodists in the 1880s and 90s. It has necessitated that I zoom in when details are available and out when details connect to broader national and transnational processes. At the same time, the state of the data has also transformed the way that I understand the AME Church’s diasporic history. Specifically, it has focused my attention on significant events and distinguished individuals that received publicity in the AME Church’s newspaper, the Christian Recorder. While a study of such people and events inevitably reproduces inherent power structures within the church (particularly with regard to women and lower class parishioners), it also makes apparent important underlying mechanisms that have sustained the AME Church’s diasporic ties in the past and present.

While this dissertation does not engage with all of the underlying mechanisms that have sustained the diasporic AME Church, it does present evidence of how a few of these mechanism have operated historically among Caribbean members of the church.
My own integration into the Dominican AME Church over the years have helped me understand the longevity of these structures. For example, my involvement at annual conferences, district planning meetings, and other national and international AME events have alerted me to the fact that the diasporic church is maintained through such special occasions that reinforce pride, commitment, and the notion of belonging.\textsuperscript{34} For the time period of this dissertation, such events included the 1884 dedication of AME buildings in Port-au-Prince and Santo Domingo and the 1885 ordination of AME preachers in Santo Domingo city.\textsuperscript{35} These occasions were singular events that fortified morale among AME members and connected the islands to the broader diasporic church. Second, the sporadic, but consistent appearance of bilingual, bicultural individuals who travel across space has facilitated the relationship between American and Dominican members of the church over time. Historically such individuals have been Afro-Caribbean AME missionaries listed on the denomination’s payroll. Biography of historical, bilingual/bicultural individuals such as H.C.C. Astwood, A.H. Mevs, S.G. Dorce, and J.P. James Jr. enable a deeper understanding of how such individuals became engaged in the church as well as the church’s dependence upon them. In the present,

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{34} The events I have attended include, the 2008 sixteenth district planning meeting, the Dominican annual conferences for the years 2012-2015, Dominican Young People’s Division conferences for the years 2008 and 2011, the investiture of Bishop Sarah F. Davis in 2013, and the 2016 AME quadrennial conference.
\textsuperscript{35} Another such event was the memorial service held in Santo Domingo in honor of the deceased AME Bishop, Rev. James A. Shorter. “A Memorial Meeting in Hayti. San Domingo Mission,” \textit{Christian Recorder}, 15 September 1887.
\end{flushleft}
such individuals represent a new generation of interpreters as well as monolingual Dominican leaders who habitually travel between countries to represent the church.\textsuperscript{36}

Two other mechanisms are not entirely covered in this dissertation, but are addressed tangentially in the first and last chapter. First, since the late 1890s, the diasporic AME Church has operated largely outside the purview of the Dominican State. This was not always the case. The lawsuit discussed in the third and fourth chapters of this dissertation indicate that members of the AME Church in Santo Domingo had ties to Dominican government and elite society in the 1880s and 1890s. Yet the retreat of AME leaders to Samaná (described in the sixth chapter) meant that Dominican and American church leaders have established the terms of their relationship for over a century without the interference of government regulation. Second, within historiography and oral history, there is a tendency to memorialize the church as part of local Samaná history. This tendency is both a result of the retreat to Samaná and of a broader narrative of Samaná exceptionalism.\textsuperscript{37} I contend that it is also symptomatic of a strategic process of history-making within the African diaspora via collective forgetting. The retreat of the AME Church to Samaná indicates that neither national nor Pan-African unity were ultimately accessible to black Protestants through the AME Church in the Dominican Republic. Collective forgetting, I argue, is not just about the power of the hegemonic

\textsuperscript{36} Since 2008, a select group of interpreters for the Dominican annual conference have included John Thomas III, Enercida Rodríguez, and myself.

\textsuperscript{37} Davidson, “Black Protestants in a Catholic Land,” 281; Davidson, “Disruptive Silences,” 14–16.
Dominican state project. It is also about the pain of having to choose between versions of nationalism and Pan-African unity when neither project offers complete equality.

**An Afro-diasporic Polemic: “Shall the Name of the AME Church Be Changed?”**

Astwood’s 1888 proposal to eliminate the word *African* from the name of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church and the debate that followed is a microcosm of the broader debate over how African descendants should best fight for equality. Some people have argued that H.C.C. Astwood was naïve or ashamed of his blackness. But I believe that his proposition reflected an idealistic Christian perspective influenced by his experiences in the Dominican Republic and the British Caribbean. It was a perspective that recognized that racial injustice existed, but dismissed the idea of a segregated church based on Christian principles and the experience of race in the Caribbean. For many African Americans, the fundamental problem with Astwood’s viewpoint was that it did not provide a way to combat structural racism. For the Dominican Protestants who sued Astwood in Dominican court a couple years later, the problem with his outlook was altogether different.

In his essay, “Shall the Name of the AME Church Be Changed to That of the Allen Methodist Episcopal Church?” Astwood recognized that the AME Church was

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founded in reaction and opposition to white discrimination. Like other black people of his time, he believed that racial discrimination was antithetical to Christianity, for it “stripped the worship of our faith of its sanctity” and “made the temples of Christ as odious as the existing slave-pens of the South.” Nevertheless, in a new era in which black people were citizens under the law of the United States did the word *African* continue serve its original purpose? Astwood argued that it did not. “When the race became citizens of the United States,” he stated, “the mission of the word ‘African’ was ended. The cause for which it was adopted had triumphed, and the prophecy of Allen fulfilled.” In Astwood’s opinion, *African* was no longer needed in 1888 because black people were not Africans but Americans. “Our identity as Africans has been lost; it has been absorbed,” Astwood claimed. The American Constitution granted black people full citizenship rights, and full citizenship signaled a new era and fresh mission for the AME Church: Christian unity without the distinction of race.

Astwood believed that changing the name of the AME Church to the *Allen Methodist Episcopal Church* in recognition of the church’s founder, Richard Allen, would broaden the denomination’s appeal to non-black people and enable AME leaders to work towards Christian unity. Like other Methodists of the period, Astwood believed

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39 Astwood, “Shall the Name of the African Methodist Episcopal Church Be Changed to That of the Allen Methodist Episcopal Church?,” 318.
40 Ibid., 319.
41 Ibid., 320.
that, “the great Methodist fraternity of the United States should be enrolled under one banner.” Such unity would be a truer reflection of God’s kingdom. Thus, Astwood called for the reunion of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the AME Church, and all other racially segregated Methodist bodies in the United States. “In this age of progress and civilization,” he stated, “this grand American brotherhood, living within the bounds of the Union, should not tolerate Africanism, or any other nationalism.” He accused American churches of “non-Christian despotism” in their absolutist stance towards segregation, and claimed that “Africanism,” like all other distinctions, “is non-scriptural, it is non-human, it is non-progressive.” In Astwood’s opinion, race distinction reinforced a system of racial oppression, and the Christian church was the foremost place where racial oppression should never exist.

Foreign missions were not far from Astwood’s thoughts when he wrote of Christian unity. Concerned that the term African would inhibit the AME denomination’s universal Christian message, Astwood claimed that, “the Church can never be a missionary church with the prefix ‘African’ to its name; it cannot be Catholic nor Apostolic.” He believed that it was hypocrisy to teach people to seek the kingdom of

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42 Ibid., 320–21. Nation-wide efforts for Methodist unification are discussed in chapter two.
43 Ibid., 321.
44 Ibid.
45 Astwood supported his viewpoint with scripture that described the end of time. Citing Revelations 7:9, he emphasized the Christian belief that “all nations and people and tongues,” will come before God’s throne in the end. Astwood claimed that “race prejudices must become extinct,” and “congregations must be presided over indiscriminately by white and black ministers.” Ibid.
46 Ibid., 320.
God while simultaneously propagating “a forced nationality to drive [them] back to the world.” In other words, if church leaders urged converts to turn to God, it was counterproductive to also burden converts with racial distinctions that distracted them from the message of equality and unity in Christ. Moreover, people residing outside of the United States did not understand the historical significance of the term African in the United States. Instead, they viewed it as a mark of racial discrimination. With the Dominican Republic in mind, Astwood claimed that changing the term African to Allen would “better adapt the Church to modifications constantly going on in social and religions relations…in the West Indies.”

While Astwood’s perspective was universal in its approach, the irony of his essay was that it satisfied no one. By 1888, African Americans in the AME Church were committed to racial uplift and viewed foreign missions as a strategic part of that objective. The word African, while perhaps not ideal, signified that they identified racially with all black people in the world. For Caribbeans, especially the Dominicans who Astwood claimed to represent, Astwood’s argument was inherently contradictory. In the same paragraph that he warned that the AME Church “should not tolerate

47 Ibid.
Africanism, or any other nationalism,” Astwood also called for the union of all American (i.e. United States) Methodist bodies. For all his discussion of Christian unity, Astwood was also a staunch defender of American exceptionalism and U.S. expansionism. A naturalized U.S. citizen and an AME missionary, Astwood believed in the AME Church’s missionary agenda with or without the word African in the church’s name. His chauvinistic attitude became apparent two years later in 1890 when he represented the AME Church against former Dominican African Methodists in a lawsuit before the Dominican court.50

Astwood’s essay, the controversy it sparked, and the various other debates about the future of the AME Church and its missions in the 1880s and 1890s evidence the myriad ways that African descendants struggled for racial equality. Astwood’s opinions represented one approach to the challenges that African descendants faced, and his story and ideas make up a good part of this dissertation. But other people responded in distinct ways. In the pages that follow, I explore the ideas and histories of other AME church leaders as they traveled across the circum-Caribbean, advanced the AME Church, and articulated various opinions about foreign missions, national belonging, and racial unity.

50 It is uncertain whether the plaintiffs, the Dominican Protestants, had read Astwood’s 1888 essay in The AME Review. If they had, they likely would have included it or at least mentioned it in the court proceedings.
Chapter Outline:

This dissertation is divided into two parts. In the first half, I analyze the connection between Dominican Protestantism and the African diaspora. In the first chapter, I present three origin points for Dominican AME history. While scholarship to date has focused on the 1820s emigration period and the history of Samaná, this chapter examines the experiences of African American descendants in Santo Domingo and the links they maintained to the American AME Church in the 1870s. In Chapter 2, I examine the ideas and events in the United States and Canada that led to AME expansion in the Caribbean in the early 1880s. While some North American AME leaders pushed for an Afro-diasporic church, other leaders warned against “ecclesiastical imperialism.” Chapter 3 traces the experiences of three Afro-Caribbean men as they moved from the Dominican Republic and Haiti to the United States, and became AME ministers. It then examines the early development of AME churches in Santo Domingo, Port-au-Prince, and the broader Caribbean under the leadership of these men in the 1880s. Together, these three chapters analyze the ways that Afro-descendants imagined themselves as part of the African diaspora and forged ties with each other at the turn of the twentieth century.

The second half of my thesis examines the Dominican AME congregation within the local context of Santo Domingo. Chapter 3 focuses on the lawsuit, Goodin vs. Astwood (1890), in which a preacher led a faction of the AME Church in Santo Domingo in a
lawsuit against the American AME Church, which was represented by the AME missionary and U.S. consul H.C.C. Astwood. In presenting their case, the separatists called themselves “Dominican Protestants” and used both historical narrative and property law to gain protection as Dominican nationals. Chapter 4 discusses the aftermath of the lawsuit and Astwood’s attempt to sabotage the Dominican Protestants by calling on his friends in Dominican government, including the Afro-Dominican president, Ulises Heureaux. This chapter shows how political maneuvers silenced the historical narrative of black Protestantism in the country. My final chapter examines the Dominican AME church under new leadership in 1898, a period when American AME leaders prioritized missionary work in Africa. With limited U.S. aid, the Dominican AME congregation dwindled and leaders retreated to the northeastern peninsula of Samaná, where descendants of African American émigrés reestablished the church.

**Conclusion:**

In studying the diasporic and local history of the Dominican AME Church, I demonstrate the varied ways that black clergymen imagined, discussed, and negotiated their multiple identities: their relationships to the nations in which they lived; their relationship to the AME institution; and their relationships with each other. My research shows that black Protestants’ religious beliefs provided an ideological basis for Afro-diasporic endeavors such as AME missions in the Caribbean. Despite these ties, the history told here also demonstrates that African Methodists—Caribbean, American,
Canadian, or otherwise—did not always agree. anti-imperialist sentiment, poverty within Afro-Caribbean churches, and public scandal limited the growth of black Protestantism in the Dominican Republic and the broader Caribbean. These factors resulted in the social marginalization of the diasporic AME Church within Dominican society, a state that continues today.

Nevertheless, both the deterrents to church growth and the endurance of the AME Church in the Caribbean also indicate the fierceness with which African Methodist leaders defended and fought for their beliefs. No, not everyone agreed. Ultimately, however, black Methodist church leaders of the nineteenth century were all committed to the idea of racial equality in one way or another.
1. Forging Diasporic Connections: Origins of the AME Church in Santo Domingo

In 1872, almost fifty years after leaving the United States for Hispaniola, African American emigrants residing in Santo Domingo reached out to leaders of the AME Church in the United States. “We the members of the African Methodist Episcopal Church of this city, emigrated to this country from the United States in the years 1824, 1825, and 1826,” they wrote. Claiming that they had always maintained affiliation to the AME denomination, they explained that, “On arriving here we immediately established our church, under the name BETHEL, and we have kept our language and religion to the present.” The “Bethel” congregation was named after the first AME Church in Philadelphia, and its members proudly reminded African Americans in the United States of their heritage. Ultimately, they hoped that their ethnic and religious ties to the United States would inspire AME leaders to send a missionary to the Dominican Republic and sustain contact with black Protestants on the island.1

Through an analysis of this letter and other nineteenth-century documents, this chapter explores and contextualizes the relationship between African Methodists in Santo Domingo and the United States in the 1870s. While the historiography to date has centered on the region of Samaná, where descendants of the 1824-1826 emigration still

reside, I shift the focus to Santo Domingo in the late nineteenth century through an analysis of three converging histories. First, after providing background on the 1824-1826 emigration movement, I examine the differences between Samaná and Santo Domingo and discuss the reasons why Protestants in Santo Domingo reached out to leaders of the AME Church in 1872. Second, I analyze the institutional changes in the AME Church and the growing demand for foreign missions that drove AME leaders to send the Missionary Secretary, T.G. Steward, to Hispaniola in 1873. Third, I reconstruct the biography of H.C.C. Astwood—the man who would eventually reestablish the AME connection in Santo Domingo—as he moved from the Dominican Republic to New Orleans in 1874. These three converging histories demonstrate the ways that African descendants imagined, enacted, and experienced diaspora in the AME Church in the 1870s.

1.1 The Precursor History of the AME Church in the Dominican Republic

From 1824-1826, an estimated 6,000-13,000 African Americans emigrated from the United States to the island of Haiti. Many of them were members of the AME Church, the first independent African American religious organization. The AME Church was established first as the Free African Society in 1787 after free black people left Saint George Methodist Episcopal Church en masse one Sunday. Led by Richard Allen, these Methodists officially established an independent African congregation in
The congregation then united with other independent black congregations at a General Convention held on April 9, 1816, when the AME Church was formally organized into a denomination. Between 1816 and 1826 African Methodism spread in the Northeast. While in 1816, the denomination had about 400 members and existed in the states of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland, by the 1826 Philadelphia Annual Conference there were 7,637 members of the church. By that time the denomination had also spread to the states of New York, Ohio, and South Carolina. The rise in prominence of the A.M.E Church in the northeast helped to establish the denomination as an influential fixture within the black (slave and free) community. It also put the church’s leaders at the center of public debates concerning African American emigration to Haiti.

The connection between African Americans and Haitians in the 1820s was forged mutually. At the time of the emigration movement, Haiti controlled the entire island of Hispaniola. Hoping for U.S. recognition and aiming to populate the eastern side of the island, the Haitian president in 1824, Jean Pierre Boyer, sent his agent, Jonathas

\[\text{RAW TEXT END}\]
Granville, to the United States to inspire black emigration. In Philadelphia, Granville met with Richard Allen and other leaders of the AME Church. Boyer’s invitation sparked debate among the black community, but Allen and others ultimately decided to support Haitian emigration. For African people in the United States, Haiti was a beacon of freedom and a constant symbol of black humanity and self-determination. The thousands of people who left the United States for Haiti in the 1820s left not only because they were fleeing racial discrimination and slavery in the United States but also because they believed in the Haitian projection: the formation and development of an independent black nation.

Life was difficult for the emigrants who settled in Haiti. Recent wars on the island had devastated the population and made resources scarce. Moreover, most of the immigrants were accustomed to city living and were not prepared for life as farmers in the tropical rural regions of the island. Historians also recount that many of the immigrants who arrived in Santo Domingo died of fever. In response to the hardships, many immigrants (about one-third) returned to the United States. Still, a majority of

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them did settle permanently on the island where they built homes and etched out a living in the cities and under-populated rural regions of Hispaniola. In the east, these regions included the port cities of Santo Domingo, Puerto Plata, and Samaná Bay.

For the first immigrants, maintaining communication with their families and churches in the United States was extremely difficult. Nevertheless, it was during the first few years after emigration that the diasporic connections within the AME Church began to take root. The colonists stationed at Samaná and Santo Domingo formed African Methodist societies sometime after their arrival. Within these small congregations, emigrants recreated the social structure and hierarchy of the AME Church. While the preacher in charge led the societies, local class leaders were responsible for mentoring the members of their class. The first congregations also had a board of trustees that worked alongside the preacher and aided in decisions on various community issues. By 1830 the Santo Domingo congregation was organized well enough to hold an Annual Conference, a yearly meeting of two or more AME congregations. At the Annual Conference a decision was made to send two preachers—Rev. Isaac Miller from Samaná and Rev. Jacob Roberts from Santo Domingo—to the 1830 Baltimore

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10 Initial reports praising the settlement at Samaná were sent back to Rev. Allen and others in the United States as late as 1825. See for example, Daniel Copelain, “Letter 1—No Title,” Genius of Universal Emancipation 4, no. 11 (August 1825): 175; “Letters From Haiti,” Genius of Universal Emancipation 4, no. 6 (March 1825): 87. See also Fanning, Caribbean Crossing, 99.
11 In an interview with the U.S. Commission to Santo Domingo, Joseph P. Hamilton reported that some African American families also lived in Higuey, but there were no Protestant churches there. The Commission of Inquiry, “Report of the Commission of Inquiry to Santo Domingo” (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1871), 224.
Annual Conference of the AME Church, where the preachers were received into the AME connection by vote. Leaders of the Baltimore Conference also approved their respective ordinations as deacon and elder and subsequently charged them to return to Samaná and Santo Domingo and continue the work they had begun there under the Discipline of the AME Church.\textsuperscript{12}

The establishment of the first branches of the AME Church in Hispaniola demonstrated the emigrants’ commitment to African Methodism and sense of obligation to the black community in the United States. Yet, it also signaled the formation of distinct AME communities in the United States and Hispaniola. Separated from African Methodists in the United States, emigrants in Samaná and Santo Domingo did not have continuous access to the AME denomination in the United States. This reality created a distinction between those who remained in the United States and those who had emigrated. At the same time, separate Protestant communities also formed on the island. After the 1830 Conference, Rev. Roberts and Rev. Miller returned to Hispaniola, but Rev. Isaac Miller died sometime after his return during a trip to the western side of the island.\textsuperscript{13} To fill the void in leadership, the Samaná congregation first solicited aid from the AME Church in the United States to no avail. The congregation then sought help

\textsuperscript{12} Payne, History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 66.

\textsuperscript{13} This version of the history comes from the oral history record, which has been documented in church histories such as Richard R. Wright, History of the Sixteenth Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (Nashville: AME Sunday School Union, 1963), 25.
from the British Wesleyan missionary, John Tindall, who was already ministering to the community of emigrants in Puerto Plata. Tindall responded by reaching out to the Wesleyan Missionary society, which sent a missionary, Rev. William Cardy, to Samaná in 1837. That year, the AME congregation in Samaná became part of the British Wesleyan Haitian missionary circuit. The congregation of African Methodists in Santo Domingo, however, received no such help since the Haitian government prohibited the Wesleyans from preaching there. Over time, this distinction impacted the development of the two religious communities.

1.2 African American Emigrants in Samaná and Santo Domingo in the 1870s

In the early 1870s, African American emigrants made up most of Samaná’s estimated eight to ten hundred residents, and they kept mostly unto themselves. For most of the nineteenth century, the enclave was the only place where African-Americans and their descendants stayed together in large numbers. In 1871, Reverend Jacob A. James Sr., an emigrant and the preacher of the Wesleyan Church, explained this

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15 Rev. William Cardy arrived in the community in the fall of 1837. For accounts of Cardy see ibid., 493-499; George A. Lockward, _Cartas de Cardy: Primer misionero metodista en Samaná_ (Santo Domingo: Educativa Dominicana, 1988); Hidalgo, _La primera inmigracion de negros libertos norteamericanos_, 163-195.
16 In 1837 the Santo Domingo congregation invited the Wesleyan missionary, Rev. Tindall, to begin missions in the capital, but government officials prohibited him from preaching there. Findlay and Holdsworth, _History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society_, 493.
17 Samuel Hazard made these estimates during his visit to the island. Samuel Hazard, _Santo Domingo: Past and Present, with a Glance at Hayti_ (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1873), 199.
phenomenon as an intentional result of endogamous practices. “We try to keep our people together here as Americans, so that they shall not fall away into the ways of the natives,” he stated. In James’s opinion, African-American immigrants had interacted too much with Dominicans in other places like Puerto Plata and Santo Domingo, and as a result they were, “all mixed-up.” The geography of Samaná, a northeastern peninsula far from both the capital and Puerto Plata’s cosmopolitan seaport, made it easier for the immigrant colony to remain relatively isolated. But things were rapidly changing in Samaná and the Dominican Republic at large.

In the five decades since the 1820s, the Dominican nation had gained independence from Haiti in 1844 only to become a colony of Spain once again in 1861. The political changes on the island adversely affected the Samaná emigrant community. During the period of Spanish rule, the American colony of Samaná experienced religious persecution at the hands of the Spanish Catholic archbishop, Bienvenido Monzón, who ordered that all Protestant churches be closed and prevented public worship of any faith other than Catholicism. The restoration of the republic in 1865 reinstituted religious

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19 According to Hazard, who traveled to the island in 1871, Puerto Plata and the capital were the only ports, “worthy of that name.” Hazard, Santo Domingo, 180.
freedom, but the nation came under colonial threat again in the late 1860s, when the U.S. and Dominican governments negotiated the annexation of the Dominican Republic to the United States.\footnote{The political events regarding annexation are well documented in Sumner Welles, *Naboth’s Vineyard: The Dominican Republic 1844-1924* (New York: Payson & Clarke, 1928), 359-408; Frank Moya Pons, *The Dominican Republic: A National History* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2010), 219-232. For a summary, see also G. Pope and Larman C. Wilson Atkins, *The Dominican Republic and the United States: From Imperialism to Transnationalism* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 20-27.} In Samaná, the emigrant community had suffered along with the rest of the local population as political instability and poverty ravaged the land. But by 1871, leaders of the community overwhelmingly supported annexation to the United States. We do not expect or wish any foreign power to come in with a sack of doubloons to put in every man’s pocket,” explained Jacob James’s brother, Theophilus, “but we want to be able to work with a prospect of enjoying the fruits of work; that we cannot do now.”\footnote{See Theophilus James’s interview in the Commission of Inquiry, “Report of the Commission of Inquiry to Santo Domingo,” 228.} Although plans for annexation never materialized, the hope for political stability and economic revival was ubiquitous among the emigrants and their descendants.\footnote{For more on black U.S. opinions of annexation, see Christopher Wilkins, “‘They Had Heard of Emancipation and the Enfranchisement of Their Race’: The African American Colonists of Samaná, Reconstruction, and the State of Santo Domingo,” in *The Civil War as Global Conflict*, ed. David T. Gleeson and Simon Lewis (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2014), 211–34.}

Yet, political changes also signaled an end to the relative isolation that James and others so valued as foreign business interests in Samaná and migration to the peninsula increased after 1871. In 1872, the Dominican government sought money from private investors and ultimately leased Samaná to an American company, the Samaná Bay
Company. Then, between 1875 and 1900, the Dominican government granted almost two-dozen concessions to various investors to build infrastructure and business in Samaná, including a railroad, pier, steamship line, soap and candle factories, and electric lighting. Although the majority of these concessions were not enacted until the 1880s and 90s (and even then to a limited extent), investors were constantly visiting the region in the 1870s. At the same time, the demography of Samaná was transforming as new groups of migrants settled on the peninsula. Immediately after Dominican independence in 1865, the northern coast of the country, particularly Puerto Plata, received hundreds of migrants from the Bahamas and Turks and Caicos islands. By 1871, Afro-Caribbeans from other islands including Nassau, St. Thomas, and Jamaica had also immigrated to the northern coast. By the early 1870s, only a few of these migrants had made their way to Samaná, but over the next two decades, many new migrants from the British Caribbean made the peninsula their home. While the integration of these migrants into Samaná society did not eliminate the unique character of the American colony, it did impact its endogamous practices and allowed for greater cultural exchange between Americans and other Anglophone black Protestants.

24 For a description of the concession given in the region of Samaná see Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi, *Samaná, pasado y porvenir*, vol. 3 (Santo Domingo: Editora Montalvo, 1945) 45-46.
Some aspects of cultural exchange took place through the Wesleyan Church that James led, which was a key component of the Samaná community. In 1871, the congregation met in an elegant chapel that overlooked the Bay, the frame for which was shipped from England.\textsuperscript{27} James led Sunday school and daylong worship services on Sundays. He also ran a weekday school of eighty to ninety children and hosted prayer meetings on Wednesdays. “We are increasing in numbers,” James proudly reported in 1871, “and I believe the greater part have a true Christian spirit and are growing in grace.”\textsuperscript{28} A man respected for his religious convictions and fiery sermons, James had attracted hundreds of American emigrants and other English-speaking migrants to his church in Samaná.

In the 1870s, the Samaná emigrant community was also drawn into closer contact with African Americans in the United States. When the U.S. government sent a commission to the Dominican Republic to assess Dominicans’ desires for annexation in 1871, members of the emigrant community met Frederick Douglass and his son, Charles Remond Douglass, who were members of the commission. Frederick Douglass interviewed Jacob A. James and his Wesleyan congregation, and maintained contact with members of the emigrant community after his visit.\textsuperscript{29} Douglass’s connection to the

\textsuperscript{27} According to Davis, the frame was shipped from England during Jacob A. James’s ministry. Martha Ellen Davis, “That Old-Time Religion: Tradición y cambio en el enclave ‘Americano’ de Samaná,” in \textit{Cultura y folklore de Samaná}, ed. Dagoberto Tejeda Ortiz (Santo Domingo: Editora Alfa & Omega, 1984), 97–146.


\textsuperscript{29} Wilkins, “‘They Had Heard of Emancipation and the Enfranchisement of Their Race,’” 213.
Dominican Republic was strengthened when U.S. President Ulysses Grant appointed Charles Remond Douglass as U.S. consul at Puerto Plata in July of 1875. Charles Douglass, who had served in the U.S. Military during the Civil War and had worked as a clerk for the Freedmen’s Bureau, arrived in Puerto Plata in September and served as consul until November 26, 1877. While in the Dominican Republic, he became close friends with Puerto Plata’s war heroes Ulises Heureaux and Gregorio Luperón. His appointment likely facilitated communication between these elite Dominicans, American emigrants, other Afro-Caribbean migrants, and African Americans in the United States during the 1870s.

First and second-generation African American emigrants in Samaná directly benefitted from the transformations of the 1870s. As white Americans invested in the region, the cacao and coffee trade increased, increasing the income of Samaná farmers. Samaná’s burgeoning seaport also led to increased wages for black U.S. immigrant farmers and craftsmen, who also began to export their products to other islands. Some families, like the Johnsons for example, specialized in boating, and carried goods to Cuba, Haiti, St. Thomas, and St. Martin. According to a modern-day descendant of

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30 For arrival see letters dated July 10, 1875, September 8, 1875, and November 26, 1877 in Despatches from United States Consuls in Puerto Plata, 1875-1906, Microfilm. Roll 1, Vol. 1, July 10, 1875-April 22, 1885.
31 Douglass was a conduit for contact to African Americans in the United States. Mayes offers one such example. April Mayes, The Mulatto Republic: Class, Race, and Dominican National Identity (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014), 15.
emigrants in Samaná, Martha Willmore, American emigrant families used the money that they earned from the economic boom to pay for education; they paid for tutors from Jamaica and the Turks islands to teach in the community’s elementary school. Some families also sent their children to African American educational institutions in the United States. Educational and economic exchange thus became key pathways for Afro-diasporic interaction between American immigrants in Samaná and other Afro-diasporic peoples. With time, the international attention paid to the Samaná peninsula made it one of the most economically stable regions in the country, enabling the American emigrant colony to prosper in the 1880s and 1890s.

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Unlike in Samaná, the outlook for the African American emigrant community of Santo Domingo was not promising in the 1870s. Residing in the country’s capital, African American emigrants were more integrated into Dominican society than those in Samaná and faced prevailing racial discrimination against poor black people. At the same time, they never directly benefitted from British Wesleyan missionary work like their counterparts in Samaná and Puerto Plata. For decades, their Methodist congregation operated independently from any larger body. These factors exacerbated poverty and fragmentation within the community.

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33 Ibid 724. Some families in Samaná sent their children to the Tuskegee Institute, which was founded by Booker T. Washington on July 4, 1881.
When the U.S. Commission visited the Dominican capital in 1871, they interviewed Elijah R. Gross, a Methodist preacher and the principle leader of the African American emigrants. Gross’s life provides some insight on the community. Like other emigrants, Gross served in the Haitian and Dominican military. He was unique in that he held high-powered positions throughout his lifetime. During the Haitian period, for example, he served as a colonel in the army and then as postmaster general for three years. Later in 1853, under the Dominican Republic’s first president, Pedro Santana, he was elected a judge, a position that he held for at least nineteen years. When emigrants in Santo Domingo were persecuted for their religion during the period of Spanish annexation, Gross advocated on their behalf. In 1862, he convinced the Spanish government to permit Protestant burial in the first Catholic cemetery in the New City (Ciudad Nueva) of the capital. Then, when the Dominican Republic regained independence in 1865, Gross, “applied to the Government demanding religious tolerance for the people, which was granted.” Gross’s involvement in Dominican government earned him many friends in Santo Domingo city. For example, Gross knew the President, Buenaventura Báez and had also known Báez’s political rival, President

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34 Although the Protestants were segregated to a specific sector of the cemetery, this act demonstrates that they received some recognition from the state. Amparo Chantada, “El cementerio de ciudad nueva: Un auténtico santuario de la nacionalidad dominicana,” Cielonaraja, accessed July 27, 2016. [http://www.cielonaranja.com/chantadacementerio.htm](http://www.cielonaranja.com/chantadacementerio.htm).
José María Cabral (1866-1868), since he was a boy. Gross also had connections with the Catholic priesthood. By 1871, Gross was highly respected in Dominican society and his connections had served emigrant community well, even though most African American emigrants existed as lower-class Dominican citizens.36

In the capital, society was more diverse and class divisions were more obvious than in Samaná. Within the four walls of the city—which was estimated to take up 4500 square yards of land—government officials and the Catholic clergy made up a small percentage of the population (6,000-10,000 people). High-class officials worked in the “balconied piazzas supported on pillars of solid construction,” that made up the government buildings.37 Catholic priests presided over the sixteen churches in the city, including the Cathedral that served as a mausoleum for Christopher Columbus’s bones. The middle class consisted of merchants and tradesmen, although business was limited in the capital. In 1873, there were only two large stores in the city, and the export products were few: mahogany, dye, cabinet wood, and cattle. Comparing the capital to lively ports in the north, one American traveler noted, “It is a question if St. Domingo city, under any circumstances, will ever become a great business place.”38 Still, near the harbor, one could find dockworkers, market vendors, and other day laborers, who made

37 Hazard, Santo Domingo, 222.
38 Ibid.
up the city’s poorest class and represented the majority of the capital’s population. Generally, these laborers tended to be darker in complexion than people of the other classes.\textsuperscript{39}

There is no data regarding the occupational composition of the African American emigrants and their descendants in the capital, although it is almost certain that—except for Gross and a few others—American emigrants were impoverished. Regarding the emigrants, historian H. Hoetink claimed that racial discrimination blocked their social advancement in Dominican society.\textsuperscript{40} Such discrimination was more acute in Santo Domingo than in Samaná since African American emigrants made up less than 5 percent of the capital’s population compared to 60-75 percent in Samaná.\textsuperscript{41} The economic pressures that they faced in the capital were compounded by the fact that as Protestants they had limited access to schools (which were controlled by the Catholic Church) and other public services led by Catholic societies. To overcome this disadvantage, Protestants founded the mutual aid society, the “Society of the Bible,” which worked to

\textsuperscript{39} While Hoetink noted that race often denoted one’s social class, he also stated that Afro-descended workers gained social mobility through the military and participation in the War of Restoration. H. Hoetink, \textit{The Dominican People, 1850-1900: Notes for a Historical Sociology} (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 96-97; Commission of Inquiry, “Report of the Commission of Inquiry to Santo Domingo,” 15; Fanning, \textit{Caribbean Crossing}, 99.

\textsuperscript{40} Fanning, \textit{Caribbean Crossing}, 21.

\textsuperscript{41} The U.S. Commission of Inquiry report states that approximately 6000 people were living in the capital of Santo Domingo in 1871. The population of immigrants in Santo Domingo originally was less than that of Samaná. According to Fanning (page 99), there were approximately 460 immigrants in Samaná in 1825. It can therefore be estimated that the immigrant community in Santo Domingo made up less than 7.6 percent of the capital’s population.
educate the emigrants’ children, take care of orphans and the sick, and bury the dead. For poor Protestant emigrants, these services provided limited security during an unsettled time.

Protestant religious meetings also provided a sense of unity and spiritual support within the community, but in the early 1870s the congregation was rapidly disintegrating as membership floundered. The most faithful members, first-generation emigrants, were aged and dying; only eighteen of the original emigrants remained. Rev. Isaac Miller, who was ordained at the 1830 Baltimore Conference, had trained additional clergymen before his death. But in 1872, only Rev. John Hamilton, a 73-year-old ailing deacon, was left. On the other end of the generational spectrum, the children and grandchildren of the emigrants were leaving the church of their forefathers. Their parents accused the Catholic Church of enticing the children away because Catholics were supposedly allowed to “dance, gamble and indulge in licentiousness [sic].”

Emigrant parents also lamented their children’s assimilation into Dominican society. By 1872, emigrant children spoke more Spanish than English, and considered themselves Dominicans despite their parents’ foreign birth. Considering these conditions, the elder

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members of the American community feared that their congregation would soon cease to exist in the capital.  

It was at this juncture that members of the Protestant congregation in the capital wrote to the AME Church in the United States for aid. In the 1872 letter that opened this chapter, Protestants in Santo Domingo claimed allegiance to the AME Church and requested that their “brethren” send a minister to aid their religious society. This was a striking request and a bit out of the blue since there had been little to no contact between the immigrants and leaders in the AME Church in the preceding decades. Indeed, in 1841, the Baltimore Conference recognized that its branches in Haiti were lost.  

Moreover, the Santo Domingo emigrant community had similarly reached out to the British Wesleyan missionaries for aid on various occasions, indicating that their allegiance to the AME Church was variable. But in 1872 the emigrant congregation was desperate for help.  

To buttress their appeal for aid, the emigrants provided details to legitimize their needs and demonstrate that it was the responsibility of the American AME Church to respond. To corroborate the claim that they had always been loyal to the AME Church,

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the emigrants emphasized that Rev. Richard Allen and Rev. Robert Morris, the first and second bishops of the AME Church had ordained their first leader, Rev. Miller. This heritage demonstrated that they were indeed African Methodists by tradition. The emigrants also emphasized the poverty and religious discrimination that they faced in Santo Domingo. Unlike Dominican Catholics, who worshiped in the city’s sixteen cathedrals, the Protestants met in a dilapidated building located in the city’s military barracks and granted to them by the Dominican government. The letter also stated that Catholic Church held daily processions in the streets and hypocritically restricted the Protestants’ “gayety of the worship.”

Elders within the emigrant community hoped that this description would persuade AME Church leaders in the United States to send a minister to Santo Domingo to aid them. They feared that without such help their religious community would not survive.

1.3 The AME Church and Foreign Missions in the 1870s

On January 30, 1873, an editorial that referenced the 1872 letter from the Santo Domingo congregation appeared in the Christian Recorder. In response to the emigrants’ request for a minister, the anonymous African American author asked a two-word question, “What hinders?” This question referenced a biblical passage in which a newly

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48 It is not clear what such restrictions entailed, however, it could be that this refers to noise produced during worship.

converted Ethiopian eunuch standing beside a body of water persuaded the apostle Philip to baptize him by asking, “what hinders?” Writing from the United States, the author used the biblical reference as a parable. “The Eunuch could not understand, why he should not be baptized,” he noted, “There was water…There also was the man of God…Lastly the Eunuch was there, with professing lips.” The author claimed that all of these components were, “clearly parts of one drama, having for its object the conversion of the Eunuch, and the subsequent glory of God.” Considering the 1872 letter from Santo Domingo, the author believed that it was similarly clear that the AME Church should begin missionary work in the Dominican Republic. “On all sides, providence point to this, as the set time, when we shall, unfurl the banner of the Cross abroad; at least in Dominica,” he declared.50

In the early 1870s, AME leaders in the United States believed that the AME Church was uniquely positioned for missionary work in the Dominican Republic. Since the 1820s, the denomination had developed into a powerful institution, and its leaders advocated on behalf of African descendants in the United States and across the world. Moreover, as diplomatic relations between the United States and the Dominican Republic increased during the annexation debate, the Dominican Republic came under the purview of AME leaders, who believed that the Dominican Republic was a black

50 Here the author is referring to the Dominican Republic and not Dominica in the Leeward Islands. “What Hinders,” Christian Recorder, January 30, 1873.
republic. Like other American Christians, they also thought that Protestant missions would help develop the island. AME leaders’ ideas about missionary work in the Dominican Republic, however, operated independently from the desires and needs of the emigrant community in Santo Domingo.

In 1872, the AME Church in the United States had come a long way since the emigration movement of the 1820s. Prior to the Civil War, the church had expanded to states in the U.S. North and West, and even reached some places in the South.\textsuperscript{51}

Beginning in Philadelphia in 1816, the denomination spread first to the states in the northeast and New England. By the 1830s, AME societies were also established in the U.S. Midwest and Canada. One of the first missionaries in the Midwest, Rev. William Paul Quinn began missionary work in Pennsylvania, Indiana, Ohio, and Illinois in 1832.\textsuperscript{52} Five years later in 1837, the New York Annual Conference sent Rev. Richard Williams to Canada to take charge of AME societies made up of ex-slaves from the U.S.\textsuperscript{53} Within two decades of the denomination’s existence, the total membership in the church reached 9,240.\textsuperscript{54} Over the next decade (1836-1846), the number of full members

\textsuperscript{51} In general, the church spread as the U.S. territory also expanded. By the 1870s the U.S. had experienced the following gains in national territory: Texas Annexation (1845), Oregon Territory (1846), Mexican Cession (1848), and Gadsden Purchas (1853), and Alaska (1867).

\textsuperscript{52} Lewellyn Longfellow Berry, \textit{A Century of Missions of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1840-1940} (New York: Gutenberg, 1942), 49.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid, 47.

\textsuperscript{54} This is the aggregated sum of reported membership for the New England (2000), New York (743), Philadelphia (3344) and Ohio (1507) districts in 1836. See “Statistics of the AME Church,” \textit{Christian Recorder}, April 7, 1866. Payne reported 7,594 members for 1936, which is considerably less than 9,240, and represented the number of communicants (i.e. those who qualified to take communion, or full members). Payne, \textit{History...
increased to 16,190. During this time and into the 1850s, the church continued its spread west and south. A missionary was sent to New Orleans in 1841, and Rev. John Mifflin Brown established four societies there between 1852 and 1857. Another missionary, Rev. Thomas H.D. Ward, founded the church in California in 1852. The AME Church also spread to Tennessee and Kentucky during this period, although missionaries had limited success in establishing sustainable congregations due to the systematic repression of African Methodism in slave holding states.

The Civil War and Reconstruction presented new opportunities for the expansion of African Methodism, as AME preachers traveled south to minister to newly freed ex-slaves. Their efforts led to a drastic increase in the church’s membership. The 1864 Bishops’ Address to the General Conference reported that, “The changes produced by the war in the South have again opened our churches in that region.” Since 1860, ministers had founded or reestablished churches in New Orleans, Memphis, Vicksburg, Little Rock, Columbia, and Natchez. By 1866, a year after the Civil War ended, the

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of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 113. See also “Statistics of the AME Church,” Christian Recorder, April 7, 1866.

55 Statistics of the AME Church,” Christian Recorder, April 7, 1866.

56 For AME church growth in the 1830s-1860s, see Berry, Century of Missions of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 49-68.


58 Congregations that were established in the south prior to the Civil War were abandoned. After the Civil War, the connection to the denomination was reestablished. Ibid.
denomination consisted of 50,000 members and 286 churches.\textsuperscript{59} Reconstruction led to additional growth, and the \textit{Christian Recorder} reported that, “The AME Church is increasing so rapidly in extent and membership that it is almost impossible for us to keep up.”\textsuperscript{60} The paper then predicted, “a membership of over two hundred thousand.”

By the 1868 General Conference, additional AME congregations were formed in the southern states of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Texas, Arkansas, Mississippi, Tennessee and Kentucky, and at the 1872 General Conference, the church comprised of seven episcopal districts representing the twenty-eight states in which African Methodist churches existed.\textsuperscript{61} By 1876, there were 206,730 AME Church members and 1,642 churches nationwide, with a total property value estimated at $3,129,196.00.\textsuperscript{62} In other words, church membership had increased over 413\% since the end of the American Civil War.

The development of the church in the 1860s was also apparent in the consolidation of its government and organizational structure. Prior to 1864, the Parent Home and Foreign Missionary Society (PHFMS) of the church operated without an episcopal leader. The missionary department was formally organized when John M. Brown was elected to the office of Corresponding Secretary of Missions at the 1864

\textsuperscript{59} “Statistics of the AME Church,” \textit{Christian Recorder}, April 7, 1866; See also Payne, \textit{History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church}, 465.

\textsuperscript{60} “Our Statistics,” \textit{Christian Recorder}, May 4, 1867.

\textsuperscript{61} Smith, \textit{History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church}, 77, 103-104.

\textsuperscript{62} “AME Church Statistics, 1875,” \textit{Christian Recorder}, March 9, 1876.
General Conference. At the following quadrennial conference in 1868, other measures that affected the organization and finances of the church were adopted. The General Conference instituted the positions of presiding elder and quadrennial lay delegates. These positions would become staple components of AME hierarchy. The conference also instituted the “dollar money” law, which required that every member of the church offer one dollar to the connection. Four years later, in 1872, the church created the Finance Department, which was in charge of receiving and disbursing the dollar money to the seven episcopal districts, paying bishops and episcopal officers their salaries, and keeping track of any remaining balance. At that time, this system was the primary income for the denomination’s connectional work, including missions; it would remain so for many years to come.

Considering the AME Church’s exponential growth and the development of its institutional organization, many AME leaders believed that the denomination was well-prepared for foreign missions. For example, in 1868, one article in the *Christian Recorder*

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63 Berry, *Century of Missions of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, ix and 91. See also “The Growth of AME Mission Work,” in Cyril E. Griffith Papers, Box 15577, Pennsylvania State University Libraries (hereafter PSUL). Citing an article by Bishop Arnett, Griffith states, “Until 1864, the AME Church did not have a connectional missionary department. Between 1844-1864, the Parent Society was under the control of the Baltimore Annual Conference. In 1864, the Board of Managers was increased and John M. Brown was elected the first connectional corresponding Secretary for Missions.”

64 In each district, an electoral college elected the lay delegates. Also, the presiding elder position was optional in 1868, but it later was instituted in all districts. Smith, *History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 79.

65 From 1844 to 1868, all African Methodists were required to pay two-cents monthly to the denomination. But in 1868 the General Conference voted to change these dues to one dollar yearly. Ibid.

66 J.H.W Burley was the first financial secretary. He served from 1872 to 1879. Ibid, 344.
stated, “The Lord has given us fifty years training, and now He throws open the gate to His ‘fields ripe for the harvest,’ and calls upon us to enter.”

Another article written months before the 1872 General Conference claimed, “Our Church is fast rising up to the full conception of her duty in the premises. She is hard at work in getting, not only a full knowledge of her responsibility, but likewise a knowledge of how best to perform it.”

The anonymous author of this second article claimed that the AME Church had “no little zeal for the salvation of her heathen kindred,” but was waiting for “some great organizing spirit, to put in shape and order the already existing missionary force.” The selection of the Missionary Secretary and the organization of the church’s finances were therefore of utmost importance. With these advancements, AME leaders could activate the, “latent missionary power of the Church” and respond to the calls from Santo Domingo and elsewhere.

Yet, calls for foreign missions did not consider the fact that the AME denomination did not have enough money in its coffers to support activity abroad. Indeed, during this period the dollar money income was used for the daily operations of the AME denomination in the United States. This fact is clearly demonstrated by the Finance Department’s first report. During the fiscal year 1872-1873, the church raised

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69 Ibid. It is also important to note that at the 1872 General Conference, attention as called to an appeal from Haiti; it is possible that the letter written by the Santo Domingo congregation was read at the 1872 General Conference. Smith, History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 100.
The bulk of this money ($18,000) was allocated to pay the seven bishops and two episcopal officers their salaries. The remainder was spent on travel, office rent, special claims and other incidentals, totaling $20,195.12 and leaving a balance of $606.03. Considering this arrangement, Cyril E. Griffith observed that, “The 1872-1873 provision in the new financial law of the church mainly was for the domestic or local missions, not for the foreign missionary work.” Thus, in 1872, foreign missions were not yet a reality.

At the very least, however, the organization of the church’s Missionary and Finance departments—along with their corresponding secretaries—added to the general feeling that the time was ripe for missions. AME leaders could readily see that the church’s institutional structure increased the possibility of spreading the denomination abroad. As the author of the 1873 letter in response to the immigrants in Santo Domingo put it, “We have a Church organization peculiarly adapted to the work.” After decades of experience, African Methodists had proven that they could

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71 Ibid. Although the laws of the church stated that the denomination should take into account the financial needs of missions, this remaining balance in the budget was not explicitly designated for missionary work. According to Chapter 5 Section 6 of the AME Discipline, the Finance Department was supposed to provide for missions by allocating equal funds to each district. The districts would then disburse the money to missionaries and theology students within their jurisdiction. With a few exceptions these missionaries and students were not trained for foreign fields, but were sent to domestic locations in the U.S. South and West. See “Approved Financial Support for the Bishops,” in *Cyril E. Griffith Papers*, Box 15582, PSUL. See also African Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Doctrines and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 15th ed. (Philadelphia: AME Book Concern, 1878), 310-312. The same rules applied in 1872-1873 as 1878.
72 “Approved Financial Support for the Bishops,” in *Cyril E. Griffith Papers*, Box 15582, PSUL.
self-govern. They had built an enduring institution that was accustomed to developing missionary churches among impoverished free and ex-slave populations in the United States. And, they had not shied away from the threat of racism and persecution in the home missionary field. The church’s perseverance and advancement during the last fifty years of its existence in the United States inspired AME leaders to begin thinking seriously about missionary work abroad.

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In the early 1870s, Dominican annexation and the Dominican Republic’s large population of African descendants inspired AME leaders to consider sending missionaries to Santo Domingo. Plans for missionary work, however, did not consider the African American emigrant communities on the island. Instead, the discourse focused on Dominicans’ perceived blackness and the country’s geographical proximity and historical relationship with Haiti. From the perspective of AME leaders, the AME Church, an independent black institution, was well suited for the task of spreading Protestantism in the Dominican Republic and Haiti, two independent black nations.

Between 1869-1871, African Methodist leaders followed the annexation debate with interest. While many African Americans opposed annexation, most African Methodist leaders supported the initiative. Articles in favor of annexation were

74 African Americans were divided on the issue. Frederick Douglass, however, was unwavering in his support of annexation. AME leaders sided with Douglass. Lauren Whitney Hammond, “Outpost of Empire, Endpost of Blackness: African Americans, the Dominican Republic, and U.S. Foreign Policy, 1869-1965”
published in the *Christian Recorder*. In January 1869, one article declared that support for Dominican annexation was “the sentiment that should predominate in the heart of every civilized and Christian Negro of the world.” A month later, another letter listed reasons why black Christians should encourage the effort. Like the immigrant populations in Samaná and Santo Domingo, it stated that annexation would bring about the end of war and anarchy and instill economic stability and trade. It also claimed that annexation would lead to the opening of schools and the free circulation of the Bible.

“Opened up [the Dominican Republic] for the Protestant Church of the land!” one article declared. Children would thus “no longer grow up to ignorant manhood,” and “the religion of the Bible would have fair chance.” According to these letters and others, annexation would undoubtedly benefit Dominicans and thus improve the race.

“Incalculable would be the benefit, which that fruitful island and its people would realize,” stated yet another letter before concluding that “the colored people of the States

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75 Letters focused on the racial kinship between African Americans, Dominicans and Haitians. They critiqued alternative perspectives. For example, one letter condemned Baez’s for his harsh portrayal of Haitians in his letter to President Grant. See “If We Are to Judge of President Baez,” *Christian Recorder*, December 11, 1873.


77 “Annex that island, and instead of it being a votary of Rome, it will become an ally to our Protestant faith. A free Bible and a free school assure this,” the article stated. “Annexation of Dominica,” *Christian Recorder*, April 2, 1870.

could not do a better thing, than roll up long petitions to our Congress, praying that these 200,000 people – ‘our kinsmen according to the flesh,’ be taken under the starry flag.”

Given their support for annexation, AME leaders were bitterly disappointed when the effort failed in 1871. Nevertheless, they sought other ways to advocate for racial uplift in the Dominican Republic. In 1873, one article asserted support for the Samaná Bay Company. “As we favored the annexation ‘scheme’ of the President,” it stated, “so we favor this commercial ‘scheme’ of these New York capitalists.” This article explained that “In fact, we would favor almost anything, that promised to bring Dominica within the influence of our goodly institutions, anything to infuse in it a new life.” Beyond American business, AME leaders imagined that Protestant missionary work would also benefit the country, and they believed that this work was the responsibility of the AME denomination. “It is the important duty of the AME Church to provide for the mission of San Domingo and Haiti,” stated one church committee in 1872. The poor conditions of the church’s finances did not matter to the committee.

80 AME leaders believed that the U.S. Congress had opposed annexation because of the country’s large African descendant population. They asked why the government was willing to spend millions of dollars to purchase Alaska, but would not annex the Dominican Republic for free. “Dominica—If Not, Why Not?” Christian Recorder, December 14, 1872.
“[God] did not say, if ye are rich, go; nor white, go; but go ye unto all nations. Go is the command.”

Like the annexation debate, AME discourse regarding missions focused on the perceived common racial link between African Americans and Dominicans. African Americans' belief that the Dominican Republic was a black country akin to Haiti was a fundamental factor that spurred AME leaders' enthusiasm for missionary work.

“Almost at our doors there are two Negro Republics, Haiti and Dominica, both of these are located on the large and fertile island of San Domingo,” stated one article before asking, “What shall be done for the religious welfare of these two Republics?” Another article written by an AME church committee barely distinguished the two countries from each other, and actually subsumed the Dominican Republic under Haiti. “The island of Haiti is appealing for help,” it stated while referring to both countries. “The island is principally inhabited by the Negro race. It is divided into the Spanish and French portions.” These descriptions indicate that African Americans thought little of the political divide between the two nations. From their perspective, both countries were

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83 Ibid.
85 The committee that wrote this letter also provided an unusual description of the island’s history and demographics. “The French are generally the children of the former masters of the island, and are generally intelligent and wealthy, proud and arrogant. The Spanish part is inhabited by the descendants of the slaves, who are as a class, illiterate and poor, and cruel... But now, thanks to God, their leading men are appealing to the Christian world to deliver them from the bodes of ignorance and the chain of Catholicism,” it stated. This indicates that the committee may not have known much about the island, and it also possibly signifies the Dominican Republic’s poor reputation among African Americans. “Among the American Indians,” Christian Recorder, December 21, 1872.
independent black republics, and the whole island of Hispaniola—whether dubbed San Domingo or Haiti—was a symbol of black self-determination and racial equality.

The racial justification for missions overshadowed the fact that AME Church leaders had a historical connection to the island through the history of African American emigration to Haiti. In fact, the discourse regarding AME missions rarely considered the African American emigrant communities that still resided on the island. For example, in the 1873 letter about the eunuch, the author never mentioned the emigrant community in Santo Domingo even though his letter was supposed to be a direct response to the emigrants’ 1872 petition for aid. “Our kinfolk implore us to come,” the 1873 letter stated. But “kinfolk” most likely referred to the supposed racial connection between African Americans and Dominicans, not the ethnic connection between African Americans and African American emigrants in Santo Domingo. From the perspective of most AME leaders, there was no racial difference between African Americans, African American emigrants, Dominicans, and Haitians; all were part of the Negro race.

Only a few articles mentioned the fact that U.S. black freemen had emigrated from the United States to Haiti in the 1820s and continued to reside on both sides of the island. T.S. Malcom, for example, wrote, “There are faithful Methodists in Port au

87 It was believed that all black people were descended from Noah’s cursed son, Ham. See A. Nevell Owens, Formation of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 25-36.
Prince, the Capital of Haiti, and there are others at Samna [sic] Bay in Dominica.” He then asked, “Who will visit them and encourage their efforts for Christ?” Another article noted the emigrants’ presence on the island when it stated, “Early in the history of our church our fathers sent missionaries to this island; there they planted the banner of Christ, and the African M.E. Church.” The article went on to explain that, “The French portion formed an independent church, while the Spanish part remained true amid the trials of years.” It then referenced a correspondence from an elder in Santo Domingo (perhaps Gross or Hamilton), whose “letter was sent last winter.” Though there had been multiple messages sent from Santo Domingo, the article lamented that, “we have not answered their prayer and granted their request.” In emphasizing the denomination’s failure to fulfill its duty to emigrants, these articles attempted to incite church leaders to action. Yet, emigrants were not the central focus nor was sympathy for emigrants the key rhetorical strategy employed to inspire church leaders to action.

In most of their discourse, AME leaders focused on racial uplift. This perspective is perhaps most clearly depicted in three additional articles written by T.S. Malcom in 1873. The three articles all reported on the travel plans of the Missionary Secretary, Rev. Theophilus G. Steward, who planned to visit the Dominican Republic and Haiti to

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assess the needs of the people on the island. “The onward step taken by the African Methodist Episcopal Church in sending out Rev. T.G. Steward…should awaken special joy, among those who desire the mental and moral elevation of persons of African descent in the republics of Santo Domingo and Haiti,” Malcom wrote. He encouraged AME Church members to take up an offering to help fund Rev. Steward’s trip. The money would also enable Steward to sponsor young men from the island who were “to be educated at Wilberforce University, in Ohio; at Lincoln University, in Pennsylvania; or at Howard University, in Washington City.” After their studies, these young men would be able to further the missionary cause on the island. It was believed that this plan would enable the AME Church to spread throughout the island.

On June 13th, 1873, the Missionary Secretary, Rev. Steward, arrived in Port-au-Prince, for the first leg of his tour of Hispaniola. His experiences in the Haitian capital further evidence the discrepancy between American AME leaders’ ideas about racial uplift and emigrants’ understandings of their own needs. According to Steward, “A short experience was sufficient to convince me that I had embarked upon a work with insufficient preparation and equipment.” During his first days on the island, Steward

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93 Steward later wrote of his experiences in Haiti in his book Fifty Years in the Gospel Ministry, published in 1921. T. G. Steward, Fifty Years in the Gospel Ministry, from 1864 to 1914 (Philadelphia: AME Book Concern, 1921), 149.
had “found in Port-au-Prince many interesting Christians, descendants of the emigrants of 1824.” After spending time with these emigrants and their children, he concluded that, “My former experience among the freedmen of the South was of no value to me here. These people were not freedmen, but citizens of an independent country.”

Perhaps too overwhelmed by what he had encountered in Haiti, Steward never completed the second leg of his trip, and thus did not visit Santo Domingo. If he had, he would have undoubtedly faced a similar situation as in Port-au-Prince. African American emigrant communities in Hispaniola were unlike their island countrymen in certain respects (i.e. religion and ethnicity) but they were not Americans either.

The AME Church did not send a missionary to Santo Domingo in the 1870s. It was not until 1878 that AME Church leaders appointed missionaries to the island of Hispaniola. That year, Rev. Charles W. Mossell and his wife, Mary Ella, ventured to Port-au-Prince where they remained for several years. All the while African American emigrants in Santo Domingo continued to wait for help from abroad; a decade would pass before their 1872 petition was seemingly fulfilled with the arrival of H.C.C. Astwood as U.S. Consul in 1882.

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94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
96 Steward was referring to Mossell when he stated, “My mission did little more than call attention to the difficulties and suggest the things necessary to be placed in the hands of the missionary going there.” Ibid.; For more on Mossell see Brandon Byrd, “Black Republicans, Black Republic: African-Americans, Haiti, and the Promise of Reconstruction,” *Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies* 36, no. 4 (2014): 1–23.
1.4 The Early Life of H.C.C. Astwood in Hispaniola and New Orleans

In the years after the American Civil War, migration from the Caribbean to the United States increased as islanders fled economic hardship, overpopulation, and war. Included among the migrants of the period, Henry Charles Clifford Astwood left the Dominican Republic for New Orleans in 1874. His life as a young adult in Louisiana reveals that the AME Church’s late-nineteenth century missionary endeavors in Hispaniola did not merely originate in abstract ideas regarding racial and ethnic kinship or the intangible memory of African American emigration. AME missions in Santo Domingo also emerged from the experiences and actions of people who crossed national borders in the late nineteenth century and connected with African descendants in new spaces.

Henry Charles Clifford Astwood was thirty years old when he migrated to New Orleans in 1874. According to the Christian Recorder, his life up to that moment had been marked by both privilege and tragedy. Born in Salt Cay Island in 1844, Astwood lived in the British West Indies Turks and Caicos Islands during his childhood and adolescence. The Astwoods were counted among the more privileged class of people.

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*From 1850-1900 the number of foreign-born back people in the United States increased from 4,067 to 20,236. This increase in Caribbean migration continued to surge in the first decades of the twentieth century. Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America* (London: Verso, 1998), 11.
Among the 676 people living on the island in 1845, 600 were manual laborers working in the island’s salt fields. Astwood’s family, however, was among the 76 other people who were either salt proprietors or public officials. Astwood was “educated in the public schools of the colony,” and as a young man, he worked in revenue services for the Turks and Caicos Islands’ new government. His brother, George A. Astwood, ran the commercial house on the island, and Astwood later joined him in the family business as the manager of George A. Astwood & Bros. This arrangement would have made Astwood a prominent member of Salt Cay’s small society, but it all ended abruptly when George died prematurely. George’s death, “so affected the health of young Astwood that under the advice of his physician he left the colony for Puerto Plata, San Domingo.” Although no documents with details on Astwood’s time on the Dominican northern coast have been found to date, Astwood claimed to have lived both in Puerto Plata and Samaná during this time. It is also likely that during this period Astwood met Ulises Heureaux, Gregorio Luperon, Jacob A. James, Charles R. Douglass, and other prominent regional leaders whose acquaintances would both serve and haunt

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him later in life. Unlike his famed contemporaries, however, Astwood had still not made a name for himself. He undoubtedly hoped that his trip to the United States in 1874 would change his situation.

By the 1870s, the city of New Orleans had seen its fair share of tragedy and transformation. A cosmopolitan port on the eve of Louisiana’s succession from the Union on January 26, 1861, New Orleans was the wealthiest, largest, and fastest growing city in the south prior to the Civil War. It was also one of the most diverse and culturally distinct cities in the United States due to its large free black community and fast-growing immigrant population. The relatively high degree of racial and cultural miscegenation between whites and blacks set New Orleans apart, as did the French heritage and cultural practices that perpetuated a three-tier caste system that allotted mix-race free people an intermediary class between white and black. The U.S. Civil War and Reconstruction, however, dramatically transformed social life and racial dynamics in New Orleans. Beyond the physical and psychological effects of war, race and class structures were irrevocably altered. White Creoles lost political influence in the

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103 Astwood and Heureaux probably first met during the time Astwood resided in Puerto Plata. Astwood also knew Charles R. Douglass who later accused Astwood of bigamy for having married in Puerto Plata and then again in New Orleans. I have yet to find records confirming this first marriage. A resident of Samaná and a Wesleyan, Astwood also likely became acquainted with Rev. Jacob A. James and his family.

104 According to Nystrom, “At the moment of secession, New Orleans stood at the apex of its wealth and strength relative to the rest of the nation…it was the financial capital of the entire South…With nearly 170,000 residents in 1860, it was more than four times the size of Charleston or Richmond.” Justin Nystrom, New Orleans after the Civil War: Race, Politics, and a New Birth of Freedom (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 7.
immediate aftermath of the war as white Republicans from the North took over state governance. Under Republican rule, emancipated slaves gained freedom and important, albeit limited civil rights. Mix-race Afro-Creoles also rose in social standing, and scrambled to secure their elevated place among African descendants within a volatile atmosphere in which the former three-tiered caste system was quickly disappearing. For those who lived in New Orleans during the post-war period, the first decade of Reconstruction had presented tragedies as well as opportunities.\textsuperscript{105}

Astwood witnessed these social changes first hand, and was probably taken aback by the overt racial violence that newly formed white supremacist groups perpetrated against black American citizens in the 1870s. While Astwood supported the abolition of slavery and the granting of civil rights to former slaves and black freemen, white Creoles saw such actions—as well as the influx of Northern opportunistic politicians (popularly known as carpetbaggers)—as threats to their traditional power.

Whites across Louisiana took action by organizing white supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan, the Knights of the White Camellia, and the White Leagues to combat radical Republican politics. These groups’ violent, vigilante tactics terrorized black

\textsuperscript{105} As the first southern city to succumb to the Union, New Orleans had been under Republican rule for four years by the time the war ended in 1865. For more on post-Civil War New Orleans see Ibid.; James K. Hogue, \textit{Uncivil War: Five New Orleans Street Battles and the Rise and Fall of Radical Reconstruction} (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006); John W. Blassingame, \textit{Black New Orleans} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).
In fact, the year before Astwood’s arrival, the Colfax Massacre—“the single most deadly incident of the Reconstruction era”—led to the deaths of over one hundred African Americans, most of them members of the state’s black militia. The next year, whites in New Orleans staged a coup d’état on September 14, 1874, ousting the Republican governor, William P. Kellogg. As a black man, Astwood likely followed these events with great interests as he sought to make a name for himself in New Orleans.

Like other immigrants, Astwood’s ability to climb the social ladder depended as much on social capital as it did his personal ambition. He had the later in spades, but he lacked the contacts that would enable him to become part of the Afro-Creole elite. To

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106 President Grant’s lenient responses to violence and white supremacists’ attacks against Republican government also indicated the extent to which white supremacists could effectively implement their strategies without much fear of reprisal. By the mid 1870s, it was apparent that Reconstruction was failing those who had the most to gain from the aftermath of the Civil War: ex-slaves and free Afro-Creoles.


108 Nystrom, New Orleans after the Civil War, 160-185.

109 Here I refer to the old aristocrat Afro-Creole class of free black New Orleanians who were artisans, professionals, and businessmen, and had lived in New Orleans and knew each other prior to the Civil War. A few of them, such as Francis Dumas and Charles Sauvinet, were Civil War leaders. After the war, they saw themselves as the natural political representatives for the masses of newly freed, uneducated black slaves. The vast majority of these leaders were light in complexion. A few even passed for white. Some of them were also highly educated—having attended schools in the U.S. North or in Paris—and like Astwood, they were multilingual, speaking both English and French. Undoubtedly, Astwood believed that he could benefit from socializing with this crowd. For more on Afro-Creole leaders see David C. Rankin, “The Origins of Black Leadership in New Orleans During Reconstruction,” Journal of Southern History 40, no. 3 (1974): 417-40.
this end, Astwood became an ardent follower of Pinckney Benton Stewart Pinchback, one of the few African American outsiders to penetrate the Afro-Creole aristocracy. By 1874, Pinchback’s political and business career after the Civil War earned him a considerable amount of wealth and power within New Orleans’s society. Astwood was fortunate to come under Pinchback’s good graces. Pinchback employed Astwood as an assistant editor for the *Weekly Louisianian*, the black newspaper that Pinchback owned. The position enabled Astwood to learn a trade that would serve him later in life. Working at the *Weekly Louisianian* also taught Astwood about American politics. Pinchback’s ambiguous morality within the Gilded Age political sphere undoubtedly left an impression on Astwood, who saw politics as one way to advance his social status; he launched his own political career after only two years in New Orleans. Between 1876 and 1882, Astwood worked as the deputy U.S. marshal in Carroll Parish. He was also an orator for the Republic Party and the deputy collector of internal revenue at the New

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110 Born in Georgia in 1837 to a white man and a slave woman, Pinchback worked as a riverboat steward and gambler on the Mississippi River before migrating to New Orleans during the Civil War. He then became an army recruiter for a year before leaving the military. In 1867, he returned to New Orleans and began his political career working under the carpetbagger governor, Henry Clay Warmoth. Within a few short years, Pinchback came to champion the African American cause in Louisiana. He became a state senator and briefly acted as the governor of Louisiana. Also a businessman, Pinchback partially own a factorage firm with Cesar Carpentier Antoine (a member of the Afro-Creole old aristocracy), and founded the *Weekly Louisianian*. Known for shady politics and his ability to amass wealth, Pinchback was well acquainted with elites in both black and white society. Nystrom, *New Orleans after the Civil War*, 101-103; Blasingame, *Black New Orleans*, 159-160.

111 See the *Weekly Louisianian*, July 12, 1879, page 3.

112 Later in life, Astwood started his own newspaper in Philadelphia. Astwood’s newspaper was called *The Defender*, and he ran it in Scranton, PA, from 1897-1909.
Orleans customhouse. These positions made Astwood part of the extensive and highly criticized patronage networks of the Republican Party. At the same time, they earned Astwood the local prestige and income that he had wanted. Thus, although Astwood never held a high political position like Pinchback, their relationship helped Astwood to quickly ascend the social ladder.

Astwood’s involvement in politics, however, ultimately did not enable him to penetrate the Afro-Creole elite class. During his time in New Orleans, he remained in a liminal social space between high black society and the black popular class. This fact is a result of the exclusivity of the black aristocracy and Astwood’s lack of certain “Afro-Creole” racial and cultural markings. Although mixed-race, Astwood was darker in complexion than the elite Afro-Creoles who gained wealth and prestige during this period—including Pinchback. Astwood was also most likely poor when he first arrived in New Orleans. These circumstances would have made it difficult for him to marrying into the endogamous elite families. Astwood’s marriage to Alice Ternoir on May 11, 1878 further indicates that social mobility was a slow, incremental process for Astwood. Alice, a twenty-two-year-old mulatto at the time of their marriage, was the daughter of a

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113 Astwood reportedly made two thousand dollars in his role as U.S. Deputy Marshal during and after the 1876 presidential election. His salary was counted among other controversial salaries paid to officials appointed by President Hayes after the 1876 election. “The Fraud of the Century,” Pittsburgh Daily Post, March 8, 1879.
mulatto brick mason and the second child of four. With two other sisters and a younger brother, it is doubtful that she had much to bring into the marriage financially.\textsuperscript{114}

Religion was another area in which Astwood differed from his social superiors. Unlike the Afro-Creoles of New Orleans, Astwood was Protestant, not Catholic. He moreover became a member and preacher of the AME Church—a denomination associated with the black popular class. The transition from the British Wesleyan Church to the AME Church earned Astwood greater social capital among black people in New Orleans—especially as Astwood quickly rose to leadership within the church. During his time in the Louisiana Conference, Astwood became a “favorite of the late Bishop T.M.E. Ward,” who hired Astwood as his private secretary.\textsuperscript{115} Astwood also became a local preacher in 1878 and was ordained a deacon in 1880 under Ward. In these positions, Astwood used the pulpit to simultaneously preach Christianity and propagate Republican politics. Astwood’s dedication to the AME Church thus elevated his social standing among poor and middle-class black people while also pushing him further away from the Afro-Creole elite class.\textsuperscript{116}


\textsuperscript{116} Ibid. This article also explains that Astwood was raised an Episcopalian and left the Episcopal church after a public controversy. He then went to the Wesleyan church and “became an active worker in that church, filling every position from assistant teacher to superintendent.” I have yet to find sources that corroborate this claim, but it is probable that he was part of the Wesleyan congregations in Puerto Plata and Samaná during his adolescence.
Between 1876-1881, Astwood continued to use both the AME pulpit and Republican platform to advocate for blacks’ rights in Louisiana. This work, however, became increasingly dangerous. The contentious results of the 1876 election led to the Compromise of 1877, which removed federal troops from the South and effectively ended Reconstruction. Black Republicans like Astwood were thus left on their own to defend African Americans civil rights. During this time, Astwood spoke out against the segregation of public schools, which was legislated by the state congress on July 3, 1877.\footnote{"The School Agitation," \textit{People’s Vindicator} (Natchitoches, LA) October 20, 1877.} He also argued against AME emigration schemes, stating that the “colored race could do better at home.”\footnote{"The Colored Emigration Scheme Dodge," \textit{New Orleans Daily Democrat}, October 18, 1877.} Member of the Colored Men’s Protective Union in New Orleans, Astwood even traveled to Washington in 1881 as part of a delegation in order to pressure the newly elected president, James A. Garfield, for equal rights in political representation.\footnote{"The Color Line," \textit{Times-Picayune} (New Orleans, LA) March 15, 1881.} Yet, given the growing violence against black political participation, Astwood and other politicians’ work on behalf of the tens of thousands of disenfranchised blacks in Louisiana increasingly put black lives in peril and yielded fewer and fewer tangible rewards.

Considering the danger that he faced, it is possible that Astwood began to plan his exit from Louisiana during the next election of 1880.\footnote{After campaigning for Garfield, Astwood and other black leaders sought political appointments in the nation’s capital in 1881. See "A Louisiana Delegation,” \textit{National Republican} (Washington, District of"}
the opportunity to leave presented itself. On July 4th, 1881, Astwood stood solemnly before the parishioners of New Orleans’s St. James AME Church. The day was supposed to have been a joyous, twofold celebration of the nation’s independence and the dedication of a newly constructed AME schoolhouse that would serve the city’s black population. Instead, the parishioners gathered to mourn the assassination attempt against U.S. President Garfield that had taken place only two days prior. Like others of his time, Astwood would never forget the tragic events of the summer of 1881. Nor would he forget the subsequent circumstances that led him back to the island that he had abandoned eight years prior. After Garfield’s death, Astwood, Pinchback, and other Republicans left New Orleans to meet with the new U.S. President, Chester A. Arthur, in Washington D.C., where they vied for promotions within the Republic party. With his background living in the Spanish Caribbean, Astwood was considered for governmental posts in Cuba and the Dominican Republic. Despite doubts about his citizenship status and other protests raised by Charles R. Douglass, Astwood was confirmed as U.S. council to Santo Domingo in February 1882. The position brought Astwood back to the

Columbia), March 28, 1881. A position in the capital would enable Astwood and his family to move outside of the Pelican State and away from the constant threat on their lives and property. But unfortunately for Astwood, Garfield did not select him for a federal position. Astwood returned to New Orleans to continue his work at the customhouse and in the church. At the time, he had no idea that a national disaster would soon change the course of his life forever.

121 “The Colored People Meet and Express their Sorrow at the Great Calamity that has Befallen the President and the People of the United States,” Times-Picayune (New Orleans, LA) July 5, 1881.
123 Douglass accused Astwood of not being a legally naturalized citizen and being a bigamist. These charges were later explained in detail to the State Department upon Astwood’s second appointment to Santo
island of his youth, and it brought Santo Domingo its very first AME missionary—an Afro-Caribbean man who was forever changed by his time living among African Americans in the U.S. South.

### 1.5 Conclusion

The three histories described above—the experiences of emigrants in the Dominican Republic, the institutional development of the AME Church, and the early life of H.C.C. Astwood—exist as multiple origin points for the founding of the AME Church’s Santo Domingo missions in 1882. These histories are not independent from each other, but converged as multiple sides of a single story of Afro-diasporic interaction in the AME Church. As the 1872 letter from Santo Domingo indicates, African American emigrants in Santo Domingo maintained sporadic contact with AME leaders in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century. American AME leaders interpreted this communication from the island within their own conceptualizations of race and suppositions regarding the AME Church’s duty to black people abroad. While AME institutional organization in the 1860s and 1870s inspired discussion about foreign missions, the denomination’s expansion to the U.S. South and success among freed black people inspired at least one Afro-Caribbean migrant, H.C.C. Astwood, to join the AME denomination in New Orleans. Astwood’s experiences in New Orleans would prepare Santo Domingo in 1886. John Handy to Thomas Bayard, New York, 4 October 1887. Despatches from United States Consuls in Santo Domingo, 1837-1906, Microcopy No. T-56. Roll 12, October 1, 1885-December 31, 1887.
him for work as U.S. Consul in Santo Domingo, where he would ultimately reconnect with the African American emigrant community in Santo Domingo. These three interconnected histories reveal the multiple layers of transnational, institutional, and biographical history that shaped the trajectory of African Methodism in Santo Domingo in the late nineteenth century.

On Monday, May 3, 1880, hundreds of black clergymen and lay delegates gathered in St. Paul AME Church in St. Louis for the seventeenth quadrennial General Conference of the AME Church. Among the range of important topics discussed over the three-week meeting, the key issue was the prospect of the AME Church’s union with the British Methodist Episcopal (BME) Church of Canada. The proposed union instigated heated discussion between AME leaders that lasted long after the conference ended. Having broken from the AME Church in 1856, the BME was led by the former AME bishop Randolph R. Disney and was the closest affiliate denomination of the AME Church. Some AME leaders argued that an organic union—in which the AME Church would absorb the BME’s 2,684 Canadian members in Ontario and Nova Scotia and missionary stations in Bermuda, St. Thomas, and British Guiana—would unite the two sister denominations according to God’s will and expand the AME Church’s Caribbean missions. Others, however, remained skeptical about the benefits of the union and worried that efforts to unite the two black denominations were a form of “ecclesiastical imperialism” and a vain attempt to increase the AME Church’s prestige abroad.¹

¹ The union between the AME and BME denominations, which came into effect in 1884, is mentioned in AME Church histories such as Berry’s A Century of Missions (1942), but to date no scholar has written a history of this union. This chapter offers an account of the debates and actions that led to the organic union.
Seemingly unrelated to Dominican AME history, the controversy over the organic union was in fact crucial to the development of AME foreign missionary work on the island of Hispaniola and in the broader Caribbean. Between 1880-1884, black American and Canadian church leaders debated the organic union and foreign missions in tandem. Was the purpose of the AME Church’s foreign expansion to unify the Negro race through conversion? Or, was the main goal of missionary work to strengthen black nations by converting foreign black people who had never heard the Protestant Gospel? The subtle difference between these two goals defined how American AME leaders thought about the proposed organic union, foreign missionary work, and the Catholic island of Hispaniola, the church’s primary foreign missionary field in the early 1880s.

This chapter traces the simultaneous development of the BME union and the AME Church’s Haitian mission in Port-au-Prince between 1880-1884 from the perspective of American AME Church leaders. To leaders in the AME Church, the success of the AME Church’s missionary station in Haiti symbolized the denomination’s potential to succeed in other foreign missionary fields. Yet, throughout this period, the Haitian mission remained woefully underfunded, causing some leaders to denounce plans for missionary expansion and the organic union with the BME Church. Instead, they argued for a greater missionary effort on the island of Hispaniola (in Port-au-Prince.

Lewellyn Longfellow Berry, *A Century of Missions of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1840-1940* (New York: Gutenberg, 1942) 63-64, 211.
and in Santo Domingo). The Haitian mission in Port-au-Prince was invoked both as a symbol of the AME Church’s potential abroad and, conversely as a justification for denominational containment to the United States and Hispaniola. These conflicting perspectives crystalized the opposing sides in the BME union debate, underscoring the distinct ways that AME Church leaders envisioned the church’s role abroad. The course of this debated also shaped the trajectory of the Santo Domingo mission after its founding in 1882.

2.1 Debating Union: Theology, Racial Ideology, and AME Expansion

In 1880, the idea of an organic union between the various Methodist branches in North America was not a new concept. As early as 1870, the white Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) proposed union with the Methodist Episcopal Church South, which had split with the northern denomination over the issue of slavery in 1844. In a letter to the MEC South, which was reprinted in the Christian Recorder, the MEC explained that it had appointed a commission to meet with “any other Methodist Church on the subject of union.”2 While the main goal was to reunite with the MEC South, the invitation was open to black Methodist denominations including the AME Church. Through the 1870s, members of the AME Church reflected on the possible union of the two white Methodist

2 “Reports and Resolutions, General Conference M.E. Church South,” Christian Recorder, August 13, 1870.
churches and wondered what would happen to the segregated black congregations within each of these denominations if the union proceeded.

As negotiations among the white denominations continued, some AME leaders suggested that the AME Church should unify with other black Methodist denominations.³ “Why should not all those who are of the Methodist persuasion join hands; thus make one body whose power and influence would be to the glory of God and the race?” asked one Christian Recorder article in 1876. “No one of the organized Colored bodies, can so well lead off in this matter as can the African M.E. Church, who stands in the relation of a mother, to them all.”⁴ Of the four black denominations, the AME Church was the largest with an estimated 400,000 members. The AME Zion (270,000), the Colored Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church (100,000) and the BME Church (5,000) represented the other independent black denominations.⁵ Unification with these groups, along with another 200,000 segregated black members of the white Methodist denominations would create a united black Methodist church nearly one

³ The union between the MEC and the MEC South was still discussed in 1875. See E.O. Haven, “Union of the M.E. Churches,” Christian Recorder, October 21, 1875; E.O. Haven, “Union of Methodists,” Christian Recorder, December 2, 1875. For the call to unify the black Methodist denomination see “Plans for the Union of Colored Churches,” Christian Recorder, December 23, 1875.
⁴ “The Set Time Has Come,” Christian Recorder, September 21, 1876.
million strong. A church that commanded such numbers presumably would be in a better position to uplift black people in the United States.

As with the white denominations, the proposed union of all black Methodist churches faced complications. Each independent black denomination had its own leadership, and men who already presided as bishops in their own denomination were not willing to accept a demotion for the sake of unification. “The very idea of organic union of all four [black denominations], must, for a time, be laid aside,” one article concluded.7

Some AME leaders, however, believed that reunion with the BME remained a viable option because of the historic relationship between the two denominations. Made up of American ex-slaves and free people of color living in Canada, the BME Church had once formed part of the AME denomination. Its leaders had split from the AME Church in 1856 for various reasons, most importantly the existence of slavery in the United States.8 Despite the separation, however, there had remained a connection between the two denominations. Leaders maintained correspondence, and delegates from both denominations attended each other’s quadrennial conferences. This history of cooperation led some to believe that union was possible. “Why should not this daughter

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6 Reunion between the M.E. and M.E. South did not occur until 1939.
8 The various reasons for the split are discussed in the next section of this chapter.
with her energetic young Bishop, come home again?” asked one article. “Surely, if she were, it would make…the African M.E. Church, so influential, that others in time, would be compelled to draw nigh.” Cooperation between the AME and BME groups, furthermore, could be the first step to the unification of black Methodist denominations.

Leaders who pursued unification with the BME in the late 1870s went to the 1880 quadrennial General Conference hoping to push the project of organic union further. A delegation of four BME leaders attended the conference, and a formal address from the BME Church was presented to the assembly. Read by the newly-elected AME bishop William F. Dickerson, the address expounded upon the friendship between the two denominations by employing the gendered language of mother and daughter. “The British Methodist Episcopal Church, your eldest daughter, has not been a whit behind in the discharge of the duties,” the address declared.

“We remember our indebtedness to you as our mother church, the memory of which still lies very near our hearts, and it is our desire that the fraternal bonds which have so long bound us together should be severed only in death to be reunited in the grand temple above.”

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10 The address was read on May 19, 1880, which the Christian Recorder reported as the twelfth day of proceedings. The delegation included Rev. Walter Hawkins, Rev. Joseph O’Banyoun, and Rev. Seth D.W. Smith. The Bishop of the BME Church, Rev. Randolph R. Disney and his wife were also present and received a formal introduction at the conference.
11 Bishop Dickerson was elected in 1880 along with two other ministers from the south, Rev. Henry McNeal Turner, and Richard H. Cain. Dickerson’s tenure as bishop lasted briefly, for he died of illness in 1884.
While no mention of union was made, by claiming the AME Church as the “mother” church, the delegation implied that the historic connection between the two churches was a familial bond. For AME leaders who were eager to pursue union with the BME Church, the fact that BME leaders portrayed their denomination as the “devoted daughter” of the AME Church was encouraging.

The BME address was well received by AME leaders. The Rev. F.J. Cooper of the AME Church, on behalf of the assembly, accepted, “the message of cheer” from, “the daughter of the AME Church.” Second, the AME Church resolved, “That we will, in the future, as in the past, labor together in consort [with the BME] for the upbuilding of the Church of Christ.” These two resolutions were unanimously approved, at which point the senior Bishop of the AME Church, Rev. Daniel A. Payne, stood to make a comment.13

“Brethren, in all the speeches, I have but one objection,” he stated. He explained:

“That is, your referring to the BME Church as the eldest daughter of the AME Church. We have no eldest daughter. When a mother has three daughters her affections are divided between them, but the BME Church is our only legitimate daughter, and all our affections are centered upon her.”14

13 Daniel Alexander Payne was one of the most influential leaders of the nineteenth century AME Church. He was most known for his work on abolition and education. For more on Payne see his autobiography, Daniel Alexander Payne, Recollections of Seventy Years (Nashville: Publishing House of the AME Sunday School Union, 1888). See also Nelson T. Strobert, Daniel Alexander Payne: The Venerable Preceptor of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2012).

The long applause that followed Payne’s comments set the tenor of friendly relations between the two ecclesiastical bodies. Payne’s gendered language one again emphasized the fact that of all black Methodist churches, the BME church had the strongest historic relationship with the AME Church. The mother-daughter relationship also imbued the AME Church with power over the BME Church. Yet, the power dynamics were not addressed at this point. Leaders of the AME Church had made clear their sentiments of friendship towards the BME Church, and they whole-heartily welcomed the BME delegation within their midst.

Days later, on Monday, May 24, the AME conference voted to arrange for the organic union between the two denominations. The vote to pursue organic union was only the first step in a long process. The newly elected bishop, Rev. Henry McNeil Turner, proposed that the union would take place only if it were first approved by the BME General Conference and then accepted by the majority of the annual conferences in both denominations. To carry out the union, the AME General Conference appointed a committee of nine men (representatives of the nine AME annual conferences) to attend the BME General Conference in Toronto and present the unification proposal before the leaders there.

Upon the BME’s acceptance of the proposal, the committee would then present the proposal to the AME annual conferences. If ratified by the majority of AME annual conferences and two-thirds majority of the BME annual conferences, the union would take effect with a formal announcement at the next AME General Conference in May 1884. With the terms thus stated, a vote was taken at the 1880 AME General Conference. The proposal passed unanimously “amid long continued and tremendous applause.”

In the months following the AME General Conference, articles supporting the organic union were printed in the *Christian Recorder*. The editor of the newspaper, Dr. Benjamin Tucker Tanner, was a staunch supporter of the organic union effort and clearly articulated his reasoning in the paper. According to Tanner, union with the BME Church was part of God’s divine plan for racial uplift. “God has made us of one class or race, Providence has given us the same Christian faith…. Let us make common cause in bringing the race closer together,” stated one article in the *Christian Recorder*. “In the eyes of our enemies we are one…why not act as one and thereby increase our effectiveness

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17 Ibid.
18 Tanner was the editor of the *Christian Recorder* for sixteen years before he was elected a bishop of the AME Church in 1888. For a biography of Tanner, see William Seraile, *Fire in His Heart: Bishop Benjamin Tucker Tanner and the AME Church* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998).
for good.”19 With his words, Tanner merged the theological belief that God had created the black race with the idea that union was a practical response to racial discrimination. Unification, Tanner argued, was the best way to engender self-help and racial uplift.

Tanner elaborated on this stance in another article printed on September 9, 1880, in which he laid out both general and specific reasons why the BME and AME Church should unite. The three general reasons he articulated were theological in nature. All Christian people, Tanner claimed, “ought to be united. Christ prayed for it. Expediency requires it.” He also stated that all Christians, “ought to work in peace and to the best advantages. This can most effectually be secured by a clasping of hands.” Last, he stated that, “All Christian people who are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. Such infirmity-bearing can best be done when the household of faith is practically one.” These three reasons were based in the Biblical principle of unity in the body of Christ, and Tanner believed that they stood as basic goals for all Christian people.20

However, as Tanner explained, racial discrimination stood in the way of Christian unity. He argued that the BME and AME denominations should merge specifically because the union would strengthen the two ecclesiastic bodies, “for mutual work, if not for mutual defense.” “Despised at best,” he argued, “their weakness only increase the weight of the burden usually imposed.” For those reading the paper,

19 “The Child’s Recorder,” Christian Recorder, August 19, 1880. In this article, Tanner argues that the AME Church’s children’s newspaper should be used by other black denominations.
Tanner’s words would have made sense without much further explanation. White Christian denominations frequently named black denominations’ “weaknesses” (poverty, inability to fund educational endeavors, and missionary work, etc.) as reasons why such denominations should not exist. The “burden usually imposed” referenced the prejudicial way that whites (particularly white American Methodists) viewed and treated black churches. Thus, Tanner argued that, “to come together, therefore, is the true policy. ‘Cast in thy log among us; let us all have one purse.’” Sharing resources would strengthen the black church and thus disabuse the church of whites’ prejudices.

Tanner’s other specific reasons in support of the BME union reveal how the ideas about racial unity and theology informed his and other AME leaders’ thoughts about missionary work. Just as Tanner believed black Christians should unite in order to strengthen themselves, he also believed that the BME and AME union would lead to greater unity in the two bodies’ missionary work. Indeed, Christian missions were at the heart of the unification movement from the very start. The vote for union at the 1880 General Conference had noted that the action would, “effect a modus operandi of cooperation in the missionary work in the West India Islands and British Guiana.” With the union, the AME Church could more than double its missions in the Caribbean.

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21 Here Tanner quoted from Proverbs 1:14.
23 “Rev. R.R. Disney Next Addressed the Conference,” Christian Recorder, May 25, 1880. The agreement for cooperation on missions was to be known specifically as the “Reunion of the AME and BME Churches in America.”
Tanner reasoned that, “being thus strengthened, we could not only move forward to the Christian conquest of all these islands, but we shall the more and the sooner be able to extend our work to South America.” In Tanner’s opinion, unification would make it possible for the church to enact more good work (i.e. Christian conversion) among black people abroad. Reciprocally, the spread of the AME Church abroad would add to the denomination’s strength. Tanner estimated that the people of South America and the Caribbean, “are already two-thirds of us, and unconsciously await to be with us.” He concluded. “Negro-American now, all these islands are to be more perfectly Negro-American in the future.” It was thus the duty of the AME Church to spread to the Caribbean, Christianize the western Hemisphere, and move from there onward to Africa.

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Despite the stated theological and ideological reasons for unification and the prospect of strengthening Caribbean missions, by December 1880 the proposal for the AME and BME union faced unexpected opposition from the AME Church’s senior bishop, Daniel A. Payne. Payne, who was nearly seventy-years-old, harshly denounced the union efforts in a letter in which he claimed that the reasons underlying the BME Church’s separation in 1856 still rang true in 1880. In his arguments against the union,

25 Ibid.
26 Ibid. Tanner listed Africa as the ultimate goal.
Payne began to articulate a distinct vision for the future of the AME Church and its foreign missionary work.27

Published in the *Christian Recorder*, Payne’s statements reflected his concern that the BME Church would suffer under the auspices of the AME Church since Canadian leaders would lose their autonomy and their ability to practice the BME Discipline. According to Payne, the BME Church separated from the AME Church in 1856 because leaders found it to be “very inconvenient to be subject to a foreign Bishop and Discipline.” He claimed that reunion with the AME Church would reinstate a foreign power over the BME Church. Would BME Canadians and the denomination’s Caribbean and South American members be willing to “submit to the nine foreign Bishops of the United States?” Moreover, Payne claimed that the BME Discipline acknowledged the British monarchy as sovereign. For proof, he cited the BME Articles of Religion: “We acknowledge Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, as our rightful Sovereign…and we also believe that no foreign potentate should exercise authority within the boundaries of her vast dominions.” This article additionally established that all BME leaders should pray

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27 Payne’s comments came months after BME leaders signed the articles of agreement for the union at the BME General Conference in September 1880. Subsequently, the articles were to be voted upon by the AME and BME conferences. While some annual conferences immediately ratified the articles, others did not have the chance to meet and vote before Payne expressed multiple reasons for rejecting the union. For example, the Tennessee conference quickly accepted the terms of union. See J.P. Campbell, “The Articles of Agreement,” *Christian Recorder*, December 21, 1880. The second episcopal districted also voted in its favor, but Payne called for a revote since he was not present to make comments. See Payne, “Some of the Many Reasons for Opposing the Organic Union of the AME Church and the BME Church,” *Christian Recorder*, December 23, 1880.
for the monarchy and “obey the commandments of the Magistrate...inasmuch as British law throws the broad shield of equal protection over the life, liberty and personal happiness of all its loyal subjects.” Payne then explained that if the BME and AME Churches were to unite, the BME leaders would have to denounce their allegiance to the British crown and become American citizens. “Organic unity between two foreign churches is impossible, especially when the political government of the one is a Monarchy, and that of the other is a Republic,” Payne concluded. He could not support a movement that would undermine the sovereignty of another foreign power.28

Payne’s reasoning also addressed different attitudes towards race in the British empire. He stated that in 1856, the leaders of the BME denomination rejected the name of the AME Church because they believed that it was prejudicial against white members. According to these leaders, the word African would “produce distinctions in the British Provinces, which were unknown to British law.”29 Leaders at the time were particularly concerned about one community of forty white women who were married to black men, but Payne believed the same principle held true in 1880. He argued that the racial distinction would isolate the white members of the BME church and make it difficult for

28 “Some of the Many Reasons for Opposing the Organic Union of the AME Church and the BME Church,” Christian Recorder, December 23, 1880.
29 Here, it was thought that the word African would cause racial distinctions and would thus make the white members feel uncomfortable. A similar argument resurfaced among AME clergy in the late 1880s as described in the introduction to this dissertation. See the introduction and Rev. H.C.C. Astwood, “Shall the Name of the African Methodist Episcopal Church Be Changed to That of the Allen Methodist Episcopal Church?” AME Church Review 4 (January 1888): 317-323.
mixed-congregations—especially those in the British Caribbean and South America—to exist.

To corroborate this perspective, Payne claimed that both Tanner and Mr. Smith, the editor of the BME newspaper theMissionary Messenger, agreed that unification would cause problems for the British Caribbean. Payne substantiated this claim with an account of a conversation he had with the two men at the 1880 AME General Conference. During the conference, Mr. Smith had turned to Payne and inform him that plans to unify all people of African descent in the West Indies and South America would never work. Most West Indian leaders, he claimed, had light skin and were “opposed to any such thing.” Moreover, “in most places the colored people are three to one white persons,” Smith explained, “and therefore the whites cannot keep up separate churches; they are constrained to worship with us.” Smith worried that the name of the AME Church would not only cause the white members to leave the church, but would also turn the government against the denomination. Such opposition to the AME Church would cause its ruin, and prohibit it from growing in the Caribbean. Agreeing with Smith, Payne shared these thoughts with Tanner who surprisingly also stated his agreement, despite having just presented an impassioned speech in which he called for the unification of 14,000,000 people under the name of the AME Church.30

Given that both Tanner and Smith continued to support the AME and BME union in their respective newspapers, Payne admonished the two men for their dishonesty. How could they, “after expressing the belief that all the peoples of African descent in the West Indies and South American cannot be united under the banners of the AME Church,” continue to “advocate the scheme in the columns of their respective journals, and to urge the organic unity of the two connections in question as the beginning of this scheme?” Payne asked. He then emphasized that the scheme would “prove very injurious to the colored West Indians and South Americans,” because it would isolate them from “the practical sympathies of the powerful ecclesiastical [white churches]” already active in the Caribbean. Thus, Payne reasoned that Tanner’s and other AME leaders’ support of the unification movement was “vainglorious, and therefore unchristian.” According to Payne, AME leaders were seeking their own glory abroad. Payne moreover dismissed BME leaders’ desire for union as “mercenary,” a sly attempt to benefit from the apparent wealth and expansion of the AME Church. Both of these motivations caused Payne to conclude with an earnest prayer that “the Lord Jesus may prevent the African M.E. church from consummating a measure so pregnant with evil consequences to herself and to West Indian Christianity.”

31 Ibid. Payne stated that it was mercenary because he believed that the BME leaders only wanted access to money for missions. Payne was additionally concerned that the union would add $9300.00 more to the church’s yearly budget. See Strobert, Daniel Alexander Payne, 90.
Tanner’s response to Payne was quick and sharp in its critique. Appearing in the same December issue of the Christian Recorder, Tanner rejected Payne’s “arguments, insinuations, and statements.” He explained that the claim that the conditions were the same in 1880 as they were in 1856 was erroneous in that it did not take into account that a new generation of leaders had assessed new reasons for unification and that ideas about the “inconvenience” of unity had changed. Tanner also scoffed at the idea that members of the British territory would have to break with the article of their Discipline that recognized the queen as sovereign and submit to the United States government. He stated that “[no one] “expects them to do it. Nor will their return to us make it necessary.” Moreover, the inconvenience of having a foreign bishop preside over Canada, would be inexistent since the BME bishop, Rev. Randolph R. Disney, “already resides in Canada and will continue so to do. And when he shall have gone to heaven, the General Conference can send another to take his place.” In Tanner’s opinion, the Payne’s arguments about sovereignty made little sense as objections to unification since they were neither logical nor true conclusions.32

Regarding Payne’s arguments about the racial isolation unification would cause, Tanner clarified his position on two points. First, Tanner took issue with Payne’s description of his speech. Payne had accused Tanner of stating that “the 14,000,000

people of African descent in the United States in the West Indies and in South America, ‘could be united under the title of the African M.E. Church.’” Tanner refuted that he had supported, “The idea of uniting 14,000,000 people under any name!” He explained, however, that considering the diversity of African descendants in the United States, West Indies, and South America, the name African, “would be more acceptable than any other” since “all were of African descent.” Tanner then rejected the idea that he agreed with the BME newspaper editor, Mr. Smith, regarding the difficulty of effecting racial union in the Caribbean and South Africa. According to Tanner, whites were allowed to join the AME Church. If they chose not to join the church it was no one’s fault other than their own, for white people had time and again proved to be “very sour grapes.”

Tanner rejected Payne’s concern that the union would isolate prospective AME congregations in the Caribbean and South America. If they were to be isolated, he argued, it would not be the AME Church’s doing.

In a letter published two weeks later, Bishop Campbell of the AME Church’s fifth episcopal district provided further critique of Payne’s opposition to union, particularly with respect to the AME Church’s experience of racial discrimination in the United States. Like Tanner, Campbell stated that the conditions for separation were not at all the

33 Ibid. Here Tanner references Aesop’s fables when he states, “We beg first to say, that if we have not received any (white persons) we can certainly offer as excuse as good, at least, as the one offered by the Fox in regard to those very sour grapes; and that excuse has generally been received as convincing.” In the fable a fox scoffs at grapes that are too high on the tree for him to reach and calls them “sour grapes.”
same in 1880 as they were in 1856 when slavery ruled the southern United States. He explained that the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 caused many free black people to leave the United States to Canada. According to Campbell, Payne had “encouraged many” in the move and was an ardent outspoken critic of slavery and the fugitive law. Yet, while Payne dared to speak out against the slave system, “the men among us in the Northern Conference and in Canada could not speak out the full sentiments of our souls upon the slavery question without giving offence, alarm or trouble to the ministers in the South.” The northern ministers’ inability to speak against slavery had negative effects, for they “were a source of grief and perplexity to the conferences in the North and to the Canadian Conference which was made up of men from the slaveholding States.” Many of these men had been slaves themselves and wanted to do more to dismantle slavery. The purpose of separation was therefore motivated by these men’s desires to protest slavery, and to do so “without the fear of doing harm to themselves or their brethren whom they had left behind in the South.” But slavery had ended. If the BME Church now desired to reunite with the AME Church, why should Payne stop them? With this argument, Campbell dismantled Payne’s claim that racial distinction should inhibit unification.34

Harshly admonishing Payne for keeping his objections silent during the 1880
General Conference only to unleash them upon the church after both parties had
accepted the articles of agreement, Campbell went so far as to call Payne’s behavior
depraved and suggest that a comparison could be drawn between Payne and Satan. “If
we go into the work of impugning his motives,” Campbell stated, “then, we turn ourself
loose in the field of imagination, a fruitful field, and that there we might draw and paint
many pictures.” He rhetorically painted one of allegory of Revelations 12 in which a
dragon stands in front of a woman who is about to give birth in order to eat the child as
soon as it is born. Campbell stated that the woman represented the AME and BME
General Conferences, and her child was the proposed organic union. Payne was the
dragon. “But we have not yet turned loose our imagination upon the Bishop in that
way,” he wrote tongue-in-cheek. “Like those great and good men, Abraham Lincoln,
Charles Sumner, and many others of their class, Bishop Payne has erred,” he reasoned. He concluded by stating that if Payne were to succeed, he would do more evil than all
the good he had accomplished in seventy years of ministry.

35 Revelations 12:1-4, King James Version, states, “And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman
clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she
being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder
in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his
heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon
stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.”
36 Here Campbell references Sumner’s protest against the annexation of Santo Domingo.
A third critique of Payne came by way of a poem entitled *Union*, published in February 1881. Written by W.H. Young of Arkansas, *Union* urged the AME Church to ratify the articles of agreement with the BME Church despite Payne’s objections. It characterized Payne’s disapproval as error in the second half first stanza. “‘Only daughter,’ do I hear, can it be that she did err? How can you deny your child with such pleadings soft and mild?” Young asked rhetorically. The words “only daughter,” identified Payne because they were words that he used to describe the BME Church at the 1880 AME General Conference. The answer to the rhetorical question was stated in the next stanza, which commanded the AME Church to “Take your daughter in the fold, as you did in days of old.” This poem suggested that despite Payne’s best efforts, the church’s overwhelming support for union with the BME remained strong. Payne’s arguments about national sovereignty and his concern over the congregations in the Caribbean and South America did not outweigh the theological arguments for racial unity that Tanner, Campbell, and other leaders championed.38

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Bishop Payne did not give up the fight against the union. He turned to a theological explanation elaborated by his friend, Bishop James Theodore Holly, a black American who had emigrated from the United States to Haiti in 1861 and created the

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Episcopal Church in Haiti. Published on April 28, 1881 in the *Christian Recorder*, Holly’s statements appeared alongside an introduction from Payne. In the introduction, Payne explained that Holly’s comments were “nothing more nor less than a development of my opinions.” Indeed, Holly’s words provided the Biblical justification for Payne’s objection to both the BME union and the AME Church’s racialized expansion project.

Holly’s letter to Payne was an exegesis on the biblical principles of church organization and union. According to Holly, the idea of spreading the AME Church to all people of African descent was heresy and a form of “ecclesiastical imperialism.” He explained that God was against imperialism in any form. Using biblical references in Deuteronomy (32:8) and Acts (17:26), Holly argued that “all imperialism in Church or State…is carefully excluded [from the Bible].” He cited the early Christian church as an example. In the first decades following Christ’s death, the Christian church was divided

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39 Holly is best known for his writing on race and nationalism, support of Haitian emigration, and work in the Episcopal Church of Port-au-Prince. He died in Haiti in 1911. For more on Holly see David M. Dean, *Defender of the Race: James Theodore Holly, Black Nationalist and Bishop* (Newton Center, Mass.: Lambeth Press, 1979).


41 Although the two bishops had not seen each other since they last met in New York in 1862, they were acquaintances. Holly, who had not read Payne’s original letter, did read Campbell’s response and wrote to Payne with sympathies that Bishop Campbell had “allowed himself to be so carried away.”


43 In the first verse from the Old Testament (Deut. 32:8, KJV), Moses describes the formation of nations: “When the most High divided to the nations their inherita- nce, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.” In the second verse from the New Testament (Acts 17:26, KJV), the Apostle Paul writes that God made all nations: “And [God] hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.”
regionally, and the Apostle Paul wrote letters to the Ephesians, Corinthians, Galatians, etc. These various groups were nations under Rome, but the “Spirit of God treated all those people as separate nationalities.” Holly further explained that this model of church organization was supported by the first four Ecumenical Councils, but then disrupted with the formation of the Roman Catholic Church, which established “Imperial Ecclesiasticism.” The Protestant Reformation, however, was a protest against the Catholic Church’s “anti-Christian spirit in doctrine.” The Reformation recognized that each people group had the “right of regulating their own ecclesiastical discipline, without lot or hindrance coming from any outside authority.” In Holly’s mind, “It would be a return to one of the most pernicious features of Romanism to commence grouping together in one Ecclesiastical organization the people of separate political nationalities.” He exhorted the AME Church to avoid this mistake so “pregnant both with heresy and schism.”

As to the particular idea of a race-based church, Holly rejected wholesale the thought that any particular racial distinction should exist. He offered two arguments to defend his position. First, Holly believed that people groups had “essential national wholeness as a people.” “Political sovereignty,” he claimed, “is yet inherent in them.” He thus believed that the Christian Church should be divided according to nation, so

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that there was a Church of England, a Church of France, etc. He dismissed the idea that such churches should be subsumed into a continental church for the sake of union. In Holly’s eyes, nations were fixed entities, whose boundaries should be respected. In a similar vein, Holly also rejected the idea that there could be distinctions within nations. The separation of the national church based on racial or class difference did not reflect the biblical principle of oneness in Christ. “The Church must not be narrowed down to any distinction of race, caste, or section in the same country,” he stated. Such distinctions were, “contrary to the catholic character of the Christian Church in which there is neither Jew or Greek, Barbarian or Scythian, bond or free, but where we are all one in Christ.” Citing the references in Acts and Revelations, Holly concluded that “All race and caste diversities…of a given nationality must be welded together into one homogenous whole for spiritual purpose in the Church of Christ, under the national appellation peculiar to the country where they exist.” To separate the Christian Church based on race instead of nation was thus to sin against God.45

Holly’s statements presented an alternative perspective on the purpose of the AME Church and its foreign missions. According to Holly, the overarching goal of any church was not to unite the race under one denomination, but to work towards the salvation of the nation in which the church was located. In Holly and Payne’s opinion,

45 Ibid.
the younger generation of AME leaders were wrong to use the cover of AME missions to advance their racial agenda. Their efforts were sinful because they did not work towards the strengthening of the nations in which missions were to be carried out, but instead sought to undermine the socio-political organization that God had divinely established. A race-based church, Holly and Payne believed, would impose implicitly on the sovereignty of national churches and would undermine race relations in countries outside of the United States.

As with Payne’s first letter, both Tanner and Campbell responded to these new accusations against the BME union. Published in the same issue as Payne and Holly’s letters, Tanner’s response dismissed Holly’s ideas on the premise that Holly was biased against the AME Church. Holly’s letter was, Tanner wrote, “very like the one we should expect [from] a Bishop whose chief aim is to build up a national church.” He accused Holly of being an American-born bishop of a Haitian church, who had adopted a Haitian viewpoint. According to Tanner, Holly’s perspective represented that of, “the men of his island who are so jealous of outside influence that they refuse to sell a white man a foot of ground, or to make such a concordat with Rome as Catholic peoples are wont to make.” The implication was that Holly’s anti-imperialist perspective positioned him against all outside Christian missionary efforts, including the work of the AME missionary in Haiti, Rev. Charles W. Mossell. “As we read again between the lines,” Tanner stated, “this is nothing more nor less than saying to our missionary, ‘You will
please, Monsieur Mossell, pack up your trunk and step down and out.”” Tanner understood this stance as an insult to both Mossell and the AME Church he represented.46

Tanner also faulted Holly for misinterpreting the Bible and the Ecumenical Councils. First, he critiqued Holly’s use of Deuteronomy 32:8 and Acts 17:26, by stating that these verses only applied to the political separation of the nations and did not apply to the ecclesiastical realm. He criticized Holly for stating that the political separation between nations that is apparent in the Old Testament under the law of Moses extended to the early church under the Apostle Paul in the New Testament book of Acts. Tanner argued that various Biblical commentators had never interpreted the scriptures in this way, and had read the words of Paul as “synonymous with what Moses said, and which upon the very face of it will only permit [a] political interpretation.” Tanner also rejected Holly’s statement that the Ecumenical Councils lead by the Emperor of Rome, Marcian, had supported the separation of nations. In the end, he concluded that, “the liberty [Holly] took with Paul, whom God called, is not such as to increase our confidence in him when dealing with men whom Marcian called.”47 If Holly could not correctly interpret the words of the prophets, how could the church trust his interpretation of the

47 Marcian was the Emperor of Rome when he convened the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451.
Roman council? In attacking Holly’s credibility, Tanner attempted to demonstrated that Holly’s and Payne’s theological arguments against union had no true foundation.

Indeed, Tanner claimed that Holly had devised a theological argument against the BME union because he desired to limit the influence of the AME Church abroad. “From our standpoint, no more insidious attempt was ever made to circumscribe our church,” Tanner wrote. He explained that the AME Church had “labored under the idea that the commission it bore from the Master was ‘to all the world,’” but Holly sought to circumvent the church from gaining ground abroad. Holly, Tanner argued, believed the commission of the AME church was supposedly “only to the people of the United States.” Moreover, Holly’s condemnation of the church’s race-based mission meant that, “if his philosophy of the divine economy be true, our commission to the United States is only temporary, if it be not a downright forgery.” If, according to Holly, the Christian Church should not be divided by race nor class, then the AME Church should not exist at all. “If this means anything, it means that all the white churches must be absorbed in us, or we must be absorbed in them,” Tanner concluded. He could not accept such an idea, for it was diametrically opposed to his belief that the AME Church was divinely situated to work for the uplift of the black race.48

Campbell’s corollary to Tanner’s article added yet another critique of Holly, who Campbell accused of “meddling with family affairs.” According to Campbell, Holly had no right to speak about the AME Church since Holly was not part of the AME denomination. As Campbell stated, “Holly is neither a Bishop, elder, deacon, nor licentiate of the AME Church. Not even a member of said church, and it is questionable to my mind whether he is a friend of it.” Campbell was particularly offended by Holly’s charges against him, which Campbell believed were intended to make him look badly in front of his superior, Bishop Payne. In words that were much gentler than those of his last letter, Campbell explained that he respected and loved bishop Payne, but believed that Payne had made a mistake. “It is but seldom that we differ,” Campbell stated, “when we do it is not our purpose to have others interfere with us.” By portraying Holly as an intruder, Campbell reversed the script regarding ecclesiastical “sovereignty” and summarily disqualified Holly from the debate.  

In his conclusion, Campbell elaborated upon Tanner’s accusation that Holly had written his letter with ulterior motives in mind. Campbell stated, “I am inclined to believe that this sympathy [for Payne] arises more from fear than from love of our church, for the advance guards are already in sight of the Haytien fort of which Bishop Holly is Generalissimo.” According to Campbell, the AME Church was advancing its

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mission in Haiti, and in response Holly was calling out “Imperialism! Imperialism!! Imperialism!!” Campbell thus understood Holly not as a theologian or biblical commentator, but as a man who was trying to save his own mission by sticking his nose where it did not belong. “If Bishop Holly wants to find something to do, he will have to seek other fields in which to employ his surplus talent and time,” Campbell wrote. In his opinion, Bishop Holly was wasting time for the AME Church had already made its move into Haiti.

2.2 Driving Expansion: Pledges, Finances, and the Haitian Building Campaign

As the AME Church’s first and primary missionary field, Haiti was of special interest to all AME leaders in the early 1880s. As a representative of an older generation, Payne believed that Protestant missions in Catholic Haiti would strengthen the Haitian nation and lead to the uplift of the Haitian people. Younger AME leaders, meanwhile, stressed that success in Haiti would enable the AME Church to expand abroad; if the AME Church could establish a self-sufficient, growing Protestant congregation in Port-au-Prince, it could do the same elsewhere. Although the subtle differences between these two perspectives came to a head in the BME union debate, leaders on all sides called consistently for support of Haitian missions. Failure in Haiti would signify the failure of both Payne and Tanner’s visions for AME missions and racial uplift. Thus, establishing a stronger mission in Haiti was of upmost concern to AME leaders in 1880.
When the 1880 General Conference convened in St. Louis, a self-sustaining mission in Haiti was still a distant dream. On May 12, 1880, Bishop James A. Shorter of the fourth episcopal district described the lack of administrative oversight that had inhibited further progress in Haiti.\textsuperscript{50} According to Shorter, Theophilus Gould Steward had refused to return to Haiti after his first trip in 1873.\textsuperscript{51} “Why he did not go back, I never knew, and never found out. I was in favor of his going back…but could not learn why he would not go,” he stated.\textsuperscript{52} Three years later in May 1876, Shorter was appointed chairman of the AME Church’s missionary department, the Parent Home and Foreign Missionary Society (PHFMS), and Dr. Richard H. Cain was appointed missionary secretary at the General Conference held in Atlanta, Georgia. Both men were paid a salary for their work. Shorter explained that Cain was also elected to the U.S. Congress later that year. “Having been given an appointment in Congress, where I suppose he was paid more, he accepted to the neglect of his ecclesiastical duties,” Shorter accused. He added that, “Dr. Cain never returned one cent into the treasury.”\textsuperscript{53} These circumstances caused the missionary board financial hardship.\textsuperscript{54} They also caused the board to annul Dr. Cain’s appointment in 1878 and appoint Rev. James M. Townsend in

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{50} At the time that he was missionary secretary, Steward traveled for two weeks in Haiti before returning to the U.S. He was commissioned to initiate the Haitian mission in 1873.
\bibitem{52} Ibid.
\bibitem{53} Ibid.
\bibitem{54} It was the missionary secretary’s chief responsibility to raise money for the PHFMS.
\end{thebibliography}
Under Townsend’s leadership, the board raised over $2000.00, and the AME Church was able to send a permanent missionary, Rev. Charles W. Mossell, to Haiti in 1878. Because of these administrative complications, the reestablished Haitian mission was only two years old in 1880, and it was not yet ready to become a self-sufficient mission.

Considering the fledgling state of the Haitian mission, Shorter was adamant that the AME Church continue support of its work in Haiti. For two years, he and Townsend had labored to make sure that Mossell would receive a full salary. Shorter explained that he had paid Mossell, “not less than $1,000 [each year], and more than once over paying him.” To raise these funds, both Bishop Payne and Bishop Campbell had supported Shorter’s efforts and had supplied Mossell with money raised from their respective districts. Lobbying church members to donate to the Haitian cause had not been easy due to the impoverished state of the people, yet the two leaders had done their best. “I am here simply to say by hook and crook, we have raised enough to give [Mossell] up until today,” Shorter reported before the assembly, “he has been paid at least $3,500.00.” By securing Mossell’s salary, Shorter had upheld the Haitian mission until the 1880

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55 The board’s dismissal of Cain caused controversy at the 1880 General Conference when Cain disputed the process by which he had been dismissed. The dispute came before the assembly on May 12, 1880, and Cain lost his protest after a vote was taken. The controversy, however, did not diminish Cain’s popularity; days later, Cain was elected to the bishopric.
56 Mossell remained in Haiti for five years. He was aided in his work by his wife Mary Ella, who ran a school in Port-au-Prince.
57 Townsend also listed bishop John M. Brown as a supporter.
General Conference, which had been his primary goal. It was now up to the General Conference to decide how to move forward in Haiti.\textsuperscript{58}

Shorter, Payne, Campbell, Townsend and other leaders who felt determined that the Haitian mission should survive were pleased with the decisions taken at the 1880 General Conference. Resolutions regarding Haitian missions were presented on Monday, May 24, when the committee appointed to review missionary reports addressed the assembly. Siding with Shorter, the committee stated that, “Haiti should receive increased attention.” The committee continued, “A greater impetus should be given to the springs of missionary action. This can be accomplished only when the combined aid of the connection shall have been procured in sustaining this praiseworthy enterprise.” With these words, the committee demanded that AME leaders support the missionary effort. The committee also suggested that the AME Church send a second missionary to Haiti. This missionary was to be paid at a “moderate rate” and was to act as an “auxiliary” or assistant to Mossell. The committee’s proclamation indicated that the AME Church would not back down from supporting Mossell’s work over the next quadrennial. In publically resolving to aid Haiti, the committee charged the whole AME Church—bishops, episcopal leaders, ministers, and lay members—to improve its fundraising efforts on behalf of Haitian missions.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
Yet despite the stated resolution to support Haitian missions, the question of how the church would finance its work in Haiti was still unresolved. As in previous years, the church had no savings or special budget set aside for missionary work. The yearly budget for missions was thus raised annually by the PHFMS and the Women’s Parent Mite Missionary Society (WPMMS), which led the missionary fundraising effort at the local church level. While there was a concerted effort among WPMMS leaders to raise funds for Haiti after the 1880 General Conference, there never seemed to be enough money. A letter from Sarah E. Tanner, the WPMMS president in December 1880 (and wife of the Christian Recorder editor) underscored this point. According to Mrs. Tanner, Mossell’s “pressing obligations make it necessary for him to urge us to send him his money; and we feel it a duty to do so, but we have [nothing] sufficient in the treasury...We have paid out nearly every dollar in the treasury.” In her call for all local women’s societies to send money, Mrs. Tanner encouraged other members to “awaken more fully to our duty,” and to “renew our covenant for the new year to work more effectually in our Mite Societies.” She believed that such work would enable the society to support additional missionaries in Haiti. Yet, the larger question of how to develop the work so that missionaries in Haiti would not be wholly dependent upon monthly donations from the AME Church in United States was not addressed.

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60 The WPMMS was founded in Philadelphia in 1874.
61 The last of the missionary funds were sent to Samuel E. Flegler who left the United States for Liberia in 1878. “To the Mite Societies,” Christian Recorder, December 23, 1880.
At the same time, the AME Church in Port-au-Prince was growing in numbers but not in wealth. In a little over two years, the congregation had gained over eighty members. Charles and Mary Ella Mossel, had also organized a Sunday school with sixty students and an industrial school. They were aided in their work by two local preachers, and a handful of teachers and other local leaders. Mrs. Mossell had also started a Haitian chapter of the Mite Missionary Society with forty-five members, the object of which was “to relieve suffering humanity and assist in spreading the gospel throughout the island of Haiti.” The Mossells had made a favorable impression on leaders in Haitian government and society at large. According to the Haitian budget report, “This church, together with its two schools, and its Mite Missionary Society, gives us reason to hope much and look favorably upon the moral and religious future of our population.” Still, they had little money to draw upon to sustain their work. The Haitian government offered no financial help for their schools and the church. Moreover, the congregation had struggled to raise $1400 to buy the lot of land where it hoped to erect a church. Writing to AME leaders in the U.S., the Mossells requested aid. “We are becoming so very well known in our religious work, that a Church is a necessity,” wrote Mary Ella. Rev. Mossell also requested, “an annual appropriation for two native preachers and a

63 Ibid. The article translates part of a Haitian government report for 1880 that was likely printed in a Haitian newspaper. Mossell refers to the report as “the Exposé or Budget for 1880.”
Church edifice.” These petitions demonstrated the extent to which the Haitian church, despite its success, was still largely dependent upon the AME Church in the United States.

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The needs of the Haitian congregation placed a heavy burden upon the AME Church, which was struggling to raise enough funds to provide salaries to the Mossells and another missionary in Liberia. Still, the potential for even greater growth in Haiti inspired AME leaders to action. In June 1881, the bishops and episcopal officers of the AME Church met for the annual general board meeting, where they reiterated their commitment to provide a salary for a native preacher and agreed to construct a church building in Port-au-Prince. The boards’ decision to honor the Haitian congregations’ petitions initiated a campaign to raise at least $10,000 for the PHFMS, $5,500 of which would be dedicated to the Haitian building fund. The campaign, which would not only provide aid for Haiti but also Liberia, became the central goal of the PHFMS over the next three years, consuming the time and effort of the whole church.

To raise the $10,000, the missionary board called on the broader AME Church to support the campaign. According to the board, a little effort for a “sacred cause” would “more than meet all the demands.” The board decided that each of the nine bishops

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66 Ibid.
should raise at least $660.00 for the special fund for Haiti. They also called on each member of the AME Church, to give $0.05 for the cause of missions. “Give us this amount and we can this year build our church, pay our salaries, double the force both in Africa and Haiti, and assist our home missionaries as well,” wrote the missionary secretary, Rev. Townsend. If at least half of the AME Church’s estimated population donated this sum, the church would raise $10,000.00 in matter of months.  

Townsend also gave practical advice for pastors to follow in local churches to help raise the needed sum. He suggested that pastors first organize missionary societies (i.e. chapters of the WPMMS) among the members of each congregation. He additionally requested that each pastor report the money they had collected in a timely fashion. To incentivize churches to action, bishops were to report the name of the church and the pastor who raised the most funds. These members would receive accolades in Townsend’s book on missions. Thus, Townsend continued the fundraising work that he and bishop Shorter had begun in 1878. Now, however, he had the full force of the general board and the 1880 General Conference behind him. With church leaders united behind a singular goal (building a church in Port-au-Prince), it was hard to imagine that any member of the AME Church would resist donating to the cause.  

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68 Ibid.
African Methodists across the United States supported the fundraising campaign. By 1882, pledges for monetary donations covered the total amount requested to erect the church in Port-au-Prince. Based on these pledges, Townsend signed a contract with an English company that would construct the church’s iron frame and ship it from London to Haiti.\(^69\) By the end of 1882, the Christian Recorder reported that Townsend was “in the home stretch in the race for a church to be sent out to Haiti.”\(^70\)

Despite these developments, money did not flow quickly into the PHFMS’s coffers between 1881-1884, and Townsend began to worry that members of the church would not make good on their pledges. For example, between September and November 1882 Townsend raised $1283.50 in pledges during his visits to various AME regional conferences, but he only collected $261.58 of that sum.\(^71\) Articles in the Christian Recorder called on the church’s members to complete their payments. “The Secretary has no wish to have the church appear in a bad light,” one article stated, “Don’t desert him now.”\(^72\) This exhortation was repeated months later in January 1883, when Townsend wrote, “I do hope that the conferences giving pledges last year will respond faithfully.”\(^73\)

\(^70\) “The Corresponding Secretary of Our Church Missionary Society,” Christian Recorder, November 30, 1882.
\(^72\) “The Corresponding Secretary of our Church Missionary Society,” Christian Recorder, November 30, 1882.
Promises to support the missionary effort in Haiti could only go so far; without money, the AME Church would fail in its endeavors.

Anxious to see that local congregations submit their money to the PHFMS, Townsend devised ways to incentivize people to give and published notices in the *Christian Recorder* throughout the spring of 1883. According to one notice, anyone who contributed over $100.00 would have their name inscribed in a window of the church building, and all members who contributed $5.00 or more would be named on the memorial list to be placed in the Haitian church.\(^7^4\) In another notice, Townsend wrote, “Let me urge upon you to forward your donations to this office at once that the amounts may appear in our annual report, and the building erected within the time specified.”\(^7^5\) This notice was published in various issues of the newspaper, and Townsend stated that it was “intended for those conferences in particular who subscriptions are already due.” Such notices shamed bishops and district leaders who had assembled their annual meetings and failed to collect money for the missionary cause. Townsend believed that, “every minister at least should be proud to know that he did something towards the erection of the first mission house in a foreign land.”\(^7^6\) He promised to publish the

\(^{7^4}\) Ibid.

\(^{7^5}\) “Special Notice,” *Christian Recorder*, February 15, 1883.

names of those leaders and churches who had already contributed—a list that would implicitly condemn those leaders whose names did not appear.\textsuperscript{77}

By January 1884, Townsend continued to face the problem of unpaid pledges, and worried that the AME Church would lose the money that had already been invested in the iron church. According to Townsend, the contractors had kept up their end of the bargain; it had been a year since he had received the plans and specifications for the iron church. The contractors had since sent the measurements to Rev. Mossell so that he could lay the foundation, and the iron frame would be ready to ship in March. Although many of the districts had paid their share, Townsend was still short about $1500.00 to complete the contract. Moreover, he had over $6,000 in pledges that were still not paid.\textsuperscript{78} He thus begged the congregations to pay their pledges so that the AME Church could keep up its end of the bargain. “Shall the house go on or shall it be left on the hands of the contractors with what we have already paid?” he asked. With only two months to fulfill the contract, Townsend could do nothing more but pray that the bishops and pastors would submit the remaining pledges.

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Tanner was not disappointed. The spring of 1884 was an optimistic period for leaders of the AME Church as they prepared for the eighteenth General Conference held

\footnote{77}{A year later, Townsend had still not published the names for fear of shaming those who had not yet sent money. See J.M. Townsend, “A Last Appeal,” \textit{Christian Recorder}, January 10, 1884.}

\footnote{78}{Ibid.}
in Baltimore. It seemed that the church had made much progress in its missionary endeavors over the last four years. In April, Townsend returned to the United States after a month-long trip to England where he arranged for the iron church to be shipped to Haiti; the remaining money had arrived just before the deadline. With construction underway in Haiti, many leaders—especially those unfamiliar with the Townsend’s struggle to raise funds—believed that the Haitian mission was thriving. At the same time, clergymen who subscribed to Tanner and Campbell’s support of the BME union and AME missionary expansion were evermore encouraged by the fact that the union was imminent since the majority of AME conferences had voted in its favor. Moreover, news of a new mission in Santo Domingo had appeared in the Christian Recorder over the past year. A cursory knowledge of the recent events would lead anyone to believe that the AME Church was well on its way to meet its expansionist goals.

Prominent leaders perpetuated a sense of optimism in their veneration of Townsend and the AME Church’s missionary endeavor in Haiti. Upon Townsend’s return to the United States, William B. Derrick, pastor of the Sullivan Street AME

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79 Two days before his departure, on Monday, March 3, 1884, Townsend attended a farewell party held in his honor at the Union AME Church of Philadelphia, where T.G. Steward was pastor. During the reception, the honored guest and bishops Campbell and Brown offered remarks to the large gathering of women, members of Mite Missionary Society, who attended the event. Perhaps indicating waning support for Haitian missions among AME clergy, it was “regretted that not a single pastor in the city was present.” Their absence also underscores the fact that women had led the fundraising campaign for missions at the local church level. “The Farewell Reception Tendered to Rev. Dr. J.M. Townsend,” Christian Recorder, March 6, 1884.

80 The Church’s foundation was laid in Port-au-Prince on April 27, 1884.
Church of New York, stated that the iron building shipped to Haiti was, “to be considered the greatest [step] that has ever transpired in the history of our beloved Zion in the mission department.”\footnote{Born in Antigua, W.B. Derrick came to the United States in 1860. He was ordained a deacon in 1868 and later became the missionary secretary and then bishop in the AME Church. See William J. Simmons and Henry McNeal Turner, \textit{Men of Mark: Eminent, Progressive and Rising} (Cleveland: G. M. Rewell, 1887) 88-96.} “Even our enemies,” he added, “who have questioned our ability in managing so gigantic an undertaking as mission fields in foreign lands, acknowledge our capability as a church.”\footnote{These words were written as resolutions of commendation for Dr. Townsend upon his return to the United States. “Complimentary,” \textit{Christian Recorder}, May 15, 1884.} Bishop Brown also bragged about the Haitian mission, listing it as one among many of the AME Church’s accomplishments. “Few people realize the strength of the African Methodist Church in the United States…We purchased and sent to Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in March last, an iron church,” he stated. He then reminded his audience that, “We have missions in Haiti, Santo Domingo, and Africa.”\footnote{“Bishop John M. Brown,” \textit{Christian Recorder}, August 28, 1884. Brown’s statement included other achievements. He wrote, “We have about 500,000 communicants, nine bishops, and between 2,000 and 3,000 pastors. We have a publishing House located in Philadelphia, where we publish all of our church books and a number of church periodicals. We have also several periodicals published elsewhere. We have a university near Xenia, in Green County Co., and another at Columbia, S.C., a college at Waco, Texas, and also an advanced school in that State. We have a Sabbath School Union.”} The Haitian mission was a boasting point for American leaders, who were keen to demonstrate the strength of the AME institution to their constituency and American society at large. The financing of the iron church had produced a sense of accomplishment that fueled the call for even greater missionary expansion. It had, then, supported Tanner’s ideological position over that of Payne.
Between 1881 and 1884, the two sides of the BME union debate joined together in support of Haitian mission. Alliance on the issue of Haitian missions, however, served Tanner more than Payne. In October 1883, for example, Payne visited Philadelphia where he gave a speech on Haiti. “Undoubtedly [Haiti] is the field of all, in connection with the other islands of the West Indies, that should command the attention of the connection,” Payne declared. Tanner reported on Payne’s speech, stating that he too supported Haitian missionary work because it aligned with his ideology regarding racial unity and his expansionist goals. Tanner explained:

“It seems to be the set purpose of Americans of European origin to drive together Americans of African origin. This is not our choice, as we have had occasion often to say; but we are not to be understood as shrinking back from it. It is, therefore, that we lay special importance to all such addresses as that of the Bishop, showing the Church her duty to hear this Haytian Macedonian cry.”

Tanner once again argued that it was necessary to forge relationships with Haitians and other African descendants of the western hemisphere in defense against discrimination. He concluded that “what is true of Hayti is equally true of the other West Indian islands. It was because of these that we have ever been favorable to a union with the British M.E. Church.” Although Payne still opposed the BME union, Payne’s position on Haitian missions enabled Tanner to propagate his own viewpoint through the Christian Recorder.
Seemingly justified by Payne’s support of Haiti, Tanner’s ideology won over the hearts and minds of his readers if not their pocketbooks.84

Tanner’s persuasiveness and the success of the Haitian building campaign ultimately did not inspire lay members to contribute more money to Haitian missions. Instead, some members of the church questioned the leadership’s focus on Haiti, which had commanded so much time and money over the last quadrennial. This challenge to Haitian missions had existed since the 1880 General Conference first declared its support for Haiti. For example, one letter to The Church Recorder published after the 1880 General Conference called for more missionary work in the English Caribbean, “where it will not demand so great an outlay of money for the keeping of one missionary.”85 The authored argued that the same amount of money in Haiti could pay for two missionaries in other islands. Years later, another letter called for more work in Africa. “Haiti, first tilled and watered by the illustrious Robinson, now leads on the triumph under the noble Mossell, while Africa, long slumbering, wakes from the sleep of ages,”86 it stated. In this letter, the author implied that the money sent to Haiti had enabled the Haitian work to prosper while the church neglected Africa. The concerns expressed in these letters indicate that not all clergy and lay members of the church saw Haiti as the primary field for missions.

86 “Not to Ruin but to Victory,” Christian Recorder, January 19, 1882. This passage refers to Richard Robinson, who went to Haiti after the first AME missionary, Scipio Beans, and later returned to the United States.
While leaders like Tanner and Payne attempted to persuade parishioners to give more for Haiti, they also faced scrutiny over the purpose and use of the funds they collected.

Despite the expressed concern that the AME Church was not using its resources well in Haiti, the Haitian mission continued to need substantial financial aid from the United States. Bishops and episcopal officers knew that the struggle to fund Haitian missions did not end with the building campaign. A notice from bishop John M. Brown to members of the WPMMS underscored this point. “Your mites must come in as before, full and plenty,” it stated. Brown explained further, “Our expense goes on. Brother Mossell, wife and child must be succored, must be fed, must be cared for.”

Prior to Townsend’s departure to London, the WPMMS had given Townsend $160.00 towards Haiti, which had depleted the organization’s treasury save $50.00. It would be impossible for the PHFMS or the WPMMS to continue to support Mossell if more money did not come in. With regards to financing missions, the AME Church was no further along than it had been in 1880. Missionary work in Haiti, as elsewhere, was fully dependent upon the amount of funds that could be raised in the moment. If the AME Church were to direct these funds elsewhere, the work in Haiti would suffer.

Yet, the drive to expand the AME Church to other regions led many church members to overlook Haiti at the 1884 General Conference. Whereas in 1880 leaders

87 J.M. Brown, “To All the Ladies of the Mite Missionary Society,” *Christian Recorder*, May 1, 1884.
called for a more aggressive effort in Haiti, after three years of an intense campaign for
the iron church many clergymen were ready to move on. A letter by Dr. G.H. Shaffer, a
physician and a AME minister in Chicago, provides insight on this new attitude. Writing
weeks before the General Conference, Shaffer called for a total reorganization of the
missionary work. He suggested that the AME Church “turn our attention from Haiti and
America to Africa.” Shaffer believed that “Africa is our field, and we must occupy it for
God and his glory, or our work as a Church will not be accomplished.”89 Shaffer’s letter
represented the sentiment among some clergymen that it was time to expand the church
beyond the United States and Hispaniola. Even Townsend sided with these views. In
one of his notices in the Christian Recorder he stated, “We all say, let the house be sent,
and the [Haitian] mission declared self-sustaining, that our funds may be turned to other
fields which are loudly calling for help.”90 Whether or not Townsend actually believed
these words or was merely stating them in order to garner support for the iron church, is
unknown. Yet, this attitude—the drive for a “more active and aggressive African foreign
policy” at the expense of Haitian missions—foreshadowed trouble for the AME
Church’s Haitian and broader Caribbean missionary endeavors.91

89 “Dr. Schaffer on the General Conference,” Christian Recorder, April 10, 1884. Schaffer also advised that the
PHFMS be separated financially from the dollar money, isolating the department from the church’s main
form of income.
91 “Dr. Schaffer on the General Conference,” Christian Recorder, April 10, 1884.
Deliberations regarding the state of the PHFMS and the AME Church’s foreign missionary work took place on the eleventh day of the AME Church’s eighteenth quadrennial General Conference in 1884. While the discussion lasted the whole afternoon, it was ultimately determined that, “the mission station at Haiti is to be made self-sustaining as soon as practicable.”\(^{92}\) The proclamation reflected the general consensus that the AME Church should pursue missions in Africa over those in Haiti, a stance that was confirmed days later when “resolutions were adopted naming Africa as the mission field.”\(^{93}\) The leaders and clergymen at General Conference had made their expansionist mission clear; the AME Church was to spread beyond Hispaniola to Africa.

### 2.3 Forging Union: Missionary Zeal, Racial Solidarity, and Common Sense

Despite the overwhelming support to expand the AME Church’s foreign missionary work, the pending union with the BME Church was not quickly ratified at the 1884 General Conference. Indeed, the discussion was tabled and sent to committee repeatedly until the seventeenth day of the conference when Bishop Henry McNeil Turner, who presided the afternoon’s session, welcomed Rev. J.T. Jenifer to the floor to present the recommendations of the State of the Church committee.\(^{94}\) Jenifer, who had

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\(^{93}\) Ibid.

\(^{94}\) The question of union was first brought before the General Conference assembly on the third day of the conference when the commission appointed to handle the union read a history of the proposed merger with the BME Church, and reported that “the union is legally consummated, and needs but the proclamation of the Bishops to make it final.” Rev. W.H. Hunter of New England then read the report of the commission. He
read the report the evening before at the missionary meeting (when it was tabled yet again), now stood before the assembly and recommended “that the Bishops issue a proclamation declaring the union of the church complete.”\footnote{The General Conference, Christian Recorder, May 29, 1884.} This proclamation would ratify the articles of agreement and confirm the union with the BME Church. Yet, in order to move forward with the proclamation, Jennifer’s recommendation had to be accepted by vote. In the preceding the vote, Payne and his few followers staked their last stand against the BME union and the expansionist ideology.

Before speaking themselves, the bishops of the AME Church allowed the delegates of the various conferences to debate the question. Rev. W.H. Hunter opened with the opinion that he was in favor of union but that the BME Church had not complied with the terms of the union and he therefore could not support it.\footnote{The General Conference, Christian Recorder, May 15, 1884.} Rev. Dr. T.H. Jackson, who sat on the rules and order of business committee, asked whether the property of the Canadian churches would become property of the AME Church and if the Canadians would be forced to follow the discipline of the AME Church. It is likely that Jackson, who was against the union, sided with Payne and believed that such actions would signify ecclesiastical imperialism. Rev. D.P. Roberts of Indiana supported stated that the articles of the union had been written and according to said articles, “the BME Church was to be known as the tenth district of the AME Church and presided over by Bishop R.R. Disney.” From the standpoint of the committee, the articles were ready to be ratified by the General Conference but they were tabled. “The General Conference,” Christian Recorder, May 15, 1884.\footnote{She would later state that the articles of the union had been written and according to said articles, “the BME Church was to be known as the tenth district of the AME Church and presided over by Bishop R.R. Disney.” From the standpoint of the committee, the articles were ready to be ratified by the General Conference but they were tabled. “The General Conference,” Christian Recorder, May 15, 1884.
\footnote{It is probable that only a majority and not two-thirds of the BME Church had supported the union.}
Jackson, stating that a larger minority of Canadians were against the union. Roberts then called for both the AME and BME churches to approve the measure only if they had two-thirds majority support. Those who opposed the union had hastened to present firmly their opinions before the assembly.

Proponents of the union, however, were quick to respond. Once again, Tanner was first in line to defend the union. He was confident when he stated that “those who in the past had voted nay would now declare in favor of the marriage of the churches.” He was sure that both the bishops and the majority of AME church members wanted the union, and if anything, the large applause that followed his comments indicated that he was right. The popular Rev. W.B. Derrick of the New York Conference was the next to speak. A longtime minister of the AME Church, Derrick was born in Antigua in 1843, but had migrated to the United States as a young man and had served in the Union army during the Civil War. Derrick may have been thinking of his birth island when he declared that, “there should be such a war whoop announcing this union that the West Indies could hear it.” “As negroes, we are one,” he continued, “Let those brethren look to this Church and to this continent for help and aid.” He ended with the suggestion to “make Dr. Jackson, who opposes us, bishop of the West Indies,” to which there was loud
applause and laughter. With these words, Derick unabashedly upheld Tanner's vision of racial unity and proclaimed the need for missionary expansion.97

A small minority resisted the expansionists’ vision, but these men were shouted down and overpowered by the majority. Jackson, for example, responded to Derrick by calling the matter “nonsense” and stating that those who supported the union were led astray by the bishops. Angered by his words, a score of members stood in protest. The Secretary of the Sunday School Union, Dr. C.S. Smith, then provoked Jackson with an impassioned address. “God has decreed that we should be one and should stand together,” he stated, “our future depends upon it.” When Dr. Jackson attempted to interrupt Smith, he replied, “You would refuse to go through the gates of Heaven unless the angel there would first let you take off one hinge and put on another; you want to change everything!” His comments caused a loud applause. Smith continued, “If the white man finds, by the use of the microscope, that there is a fragment of a drop of negro blood in one’s veins he consigns him with the rest of us. I accept the situation. Let us unite and the last shall be first.” Smith’s treatment of Jackson demonstrated that the rising generation of AME leaders—men such as Smith, Tanner, and Derrick, who would all later become bishops—would push forth their agenda undaunted by the few who opposed them. Their belief in interrelated project of Christian missions and racial unity

was poised to influence and direct the trajectory of the church’s missionary work for years to come.98

With the opposition waning in the light of Smith’s vehement speech, Rev. G.W. Bryant of Mississippi requested that Bishop Disney of the BME Church attest to the Canadians’ will for union. Like Tanner, Campbell, and Smith, Disney desired union and stated that he was “opposed to the divisions and subdivisions of the colored people.” He characterized division as “the old policy of slavery,” in which whites divided blacks in order to conquer them. Disney further explained that he had not officially declared the union among the BME churches because he was waiting for the results of the AME conference. He did, however, bring with him the seal of the BME Church, which he promised to submit to the AME conference if union came into effect.99 When asked if “the oppositions in the BME Church had dwindled,” Disney stated that they had “dwindled to nothing,” and informed the assembly that the main leader of the Canadian opposition, Josiah Henderson, “had been called away to Heaven or to some other place.” The suggestion that Henderson may not be in heaven after his death was likely taken as a warning to those who opposed the AME and BME proposed union.100

98 Ibid.
99 Disney also informed the assembly that the majority of the Canadian church property was already in the name of the AME Church.
Having heard Bishop Disney’s appeal on behalf of union, the bishops of the AME Church began to voice their opinions one by one. Payne began, responding to Disney and the general assembly with a request for patience. He then proceeded to present his arguments against union as he had previously written in the *Christian Recorder*. Payne claimed that “not a minority but a large majority of the Canadian churches were opposed to the union.” He then stated that, “he had always opposed it, and always would.” Payne predicted that, “In thirty years the union would be greatly regretted.” Campbell followed Payne, stating that, “he thought [himself] the greatest sinner for not issuing the proclamation of union three years ago. ‘I only stopped fighting against Bishop Payne for fear I would cause his death, and in stopping I sinned against the orders of the General Conference.’” While the seven other bishops’ comments were not recorded in detail, it is clear that the majority of them sided with Campbell. Bishops Brown, Ward, Cain, voiced support for union. Bishop Dickerson read letters from Canada in favor of union, and Bishop Turner called for the immediate adoption of the report. Only Bishop Shorter sided with Payne by declaring that “the Canada church went off in 1856 and if its reasons were good then, they are good now.” Despite Payne’s best attempts, his battle against a younger generation of AME leadership had failed.\textsuperscript{101}

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.
When the bishops finished their speeches, the vote was cast and the report that called for the immediate proclamation of union was approved with 106 supporting votes to 5 opposing votes. Payne asked that his protest be recorded in the minutes, and Bishop Disney was called to hand over the seal of the BME Church. After four years of debate, the organic union was finally ratified by the AME Church. Now, its supporters awaited the final proclamation of the organic union at the BME’s conference in September.

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The BME Conference opened on Monday, September 1, 1884 in Chatham, Ontario. Everyone in attendance knew that the question of union would be the most important and most controversial topic of discussion. On Wednesday, the union proposal was brought to the floor with a resolution that declared that in the event of the union’s approval all members of the conference would “solemnly pledge themselves in the presence of Almighty God…to accept wholly the same.” Immediately, the leader of the Canadian clergymen who opposed union, Mr. Hawkins, protested and asked that the resolution be tabled. His motion failed and the original resolution carried. The floor was then open for discussion of the resolutions that would ratify the union. The resolutions called for the confirmation of the reunion and entrusted the Bishops and
officers of the AME and BME churches to work out the details of the union going forward. As at the AME General Conference, a heated debate ensued.102

For those supporting the union, it was clear that the majority of the BME members desired the consolidation of the two church bodies, and the matter had drawn on long enough. This was not the first time that the BME had discussed the union. Four years ago, the General Conference had approved the terms and had submitted it to the BME annual conferences. Then in June of 1881, a convention was held in Hamilton, Ontario to further discuss the matter, and a large majority had ratified the articles of agreement with the AME Church. At the meeting, 2,690 members had favored union and only 539 were against it. It was now time to enact the majority’s wishes.103

The opposition, however, was concerned about the power dynamics between the two denominations. Rev. Watkins of Chatham defended the opposition’s views, arguing that “in the case of the fusion of other Methodist churches, the distinctive names are thrown away and a new one substituted, but in this case absorption was to ensue.” He then asked if the BME Church was to hand over the deeds of its property to the AME Church, to which the voices in the assembly responded with a loud “No, no.” “If we were to have a union let us have one that would be a blessing, not a curse,” he concluded. R. Berry of London, also from the opposition, brought up the topic of the

103 Ibid.
BME Discipline. He stated that he would support the union “if the BME could retain their Discipline.” Yet, it seemed that the BME members would be forced to assume the AME Discipline. In the minds of these men, Rev. Hawkins, and others, unification threatened the BME’s autonomy over its property, its religious practice, and its beliefs.104

Union supporters countered the idea of AME imperialism, and emphasized that union would make the BME able to fund its Caribbean branches. For example, Mr. O’Banyon of Colchester “repudiated the idea that the AME Bishops were to be looked on as in any sense ‘foreign’ rulers.” He also stated that “this union would embrace in its operations all the world in the sphere of its evangelizing influence.” O’Banyon’s words supported an earlier argument presented by one Mr. Harper. Harper, a minister from the Danish Caribbean island of St. Thomas, explained that the BME Church’s Caribbean missions were, “strongly in favor of union.” Harper himself was called to the St. Thomas missionary field, but the BME could not afford to support his ministry. He reported that “in the important Island of St. Thomas, with 17,000 people, and a white population of only 2,000, he had, during seven years, only received $90.00.” “The help received from Ontario was insufficient,” he claimed. As others, Harper believed that the union would rectify the problem and provide financial stability for the Caribbean churches. This support would then unite Afro-descendants throughout the hemisphere. There was no

104 Ibid.
mention of the AME Church’s struggle to maintain its mission in Haiti, and it is doubtful that the majority of Canadian members had knowledge of the PHFMS’s financial troubles.105

The AME delegation to the BME General Conference did not clarify the denomination’s financial issues. Two out of the seven AME representatives, Dr. Tanner and Bishop Campbell, were the men most in favor of the union. These two men both had the opportunity to address the BME assembly, and both made comments in favor of union. The only other AME representative to speak before the BME conference, Bishop Shorter, had voted with Payne. Yet, neither Shorter, nor the AME missionary secretary, Rev. Townsend (who was also a member of the delegation), said anything about Haiti. Thus, the shortcomings of the Haitian mission were never brought before the BME Conference.106

The speeches that Tanner, Campbell, and Shorter offered on behalf of the AME Church were intended to clarify the terms of the agreement of the union. Campbell, for example, explained that if the BME Church was to accept the union, the Canadian churches would then operate under the discipline of the AME Church, “so far as they could consistently with their own interest,” until the next AME General Conference in

105 Ibid.
106 Ibid. The members of the delegation included J.M. Townsend, C.S. Smith, J.C. Embry, B.T. Tanner, J.P. Shorter, B.W. Arnett, and J.P. Campbell. According to an article, “The object aimed at by this deputation was to ascertain the real mind of the ministry and laity of our sister church, and if convinced of its sincerity to issue the proclamation as ordered.” “Notification,” Christian Recorder, October 30, 1884.
1888. At that point, the BME representatives would submit amendments to the discipline. Campbell further explained that the AME Church would not interfere with the BME Church’s property and that young men of the BME Church would have access to Wilberforce University. According the Campbell, “the BME Church would be strengthened by aid from the States.” If the union was approved, the former BME Church would form the AME Church’s new tenth district with Bishop Disney as the head, and its ministers would have access to the church’s educational institutions and missionary funds.107

Campbell’s speech caused additional controversy among the Canadian members, to which Shorter responded. The representative of the AME minority opposed to union, Shorter encouraged the BME Church to hold off on voting for union if its members were not ready to enter into the agreement. He also stated that he “favored the retention by the BME Church of its zeal and hymn book.” Shorter’s words were meant to emphasize his position against ecclesiastical imperialism and caution the Canadian clergy against the union. In Shorter’s perspective, if the Canadians were concerned about losing their autonomy, they should either postpone the vote or vote against the union.108

Countering Shorter, Tanner next addressed the assembly with words that betrayed his alarm. Having worked so hard to promote union, Tanner stated that he felt

108 Ibid.
like crying and laughing at the same time. How was it possible that “this grand project, for the benefit of the colored race throughout the world, [was] likely to fall through on account of a few technicalities?” he asked. In his mind, it made no sense that the union that so many had already approved would be blocked because of details that could be overlooked for the greater good of the project. Luckily for Tanner, the BME bishop, Rev. Disney, interceded with a speech advocating for missions, and Campbell once again clarified that “the Canadian branch would have full representation and power to have their wished attended to in the [next] conference.” With these final words the lead proponents for union hoped that the concerns of the BME ministers would be laid to rest.109

By the time the assembly was ready to vote, the opposition could sense it had lost its battle. In a move to mitigate the loss, Mr. Hawkins and Mr. Smith asked that the resolution be amended with the conditions that the seal of the BME Church and the BME discipline would not be handed over to the AME Church until the next session of the General Conference. Bishop Disney, however, admonished the two men, stating that this motion was out of order. Bishop Campbell then informed the conference that “if this amendment prevailed, he could not read the proclamation of union.”110 The matter was

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109 Ibid.
110 The motion was out of order because it would change the substance of the agreement.
dropped and the vote for union was put forward and passed narrowly with a two-thirds majority of 23 votes in support of union and 10 against it.

The next day, Thursday, September 4, 1884, commenced with a devotional service, during which Bishop Campbell read the proclamation of union for the first time. When the proclamation had been read, the congregation joined Bishop Cain in singing the missionary song “Over the Ocean Wave.” Bishop Campbell then invited the conference to “extend the right hand of fellowship,” shaking hands with the bishops and with each other. The sense of unity that prevailed during this moment led Rev. Miller to call for a second, unanimous vote for reunion. Many of the ministers who had voted against union the previous day came forward to withdraw their protests, and the symbolic second vote was passed with twenty-seven votes in support of union and only two votes against it. The opposition had waned to a small fraction of the votes; union was the order of the day.

With the close of the BME Conference, the AME Church gained over three thousand members in Canada and missionary stations in the British and Danish

111 The two votes of opposition were by Elder Anderson and Rev. Crosby. Anderson explained that, “‘he wanted the full rights of British connection.’” Bishop Campbell then offered an explanation that satisfied him. For his part, Rev. Crosby, “wished to be understood as not opposed to union but arriving late.” Thus, the vote was practically unanimous. “The BME Conference,” *Christian Recorder*, October 2, 1884.
112 Weeks later, the *Christian Recorder* announced the ratification of the AME and BME union by printing a copy of the official proclamation of union. Signed by the nine AME bishops on September 4, 1884, the proclamation explicitly stated, “We, the Bishops of the AME Church, do proclaim this day the completion of organized union.” The announcement was a firm, albeit short confirmation to an agreement that had taken years to form. “Notification,” *Christian Recorder*, October 30, 1884.
Caribbean. Yet, despite the excitement that the expansion brought to leaders such as Campbell and Tanner, the question of how the church would handle its expanded responsibilities loomed large. Leaders in the AME Church were aware that the union “[did] not give to our Church any immediate financial help,” and actually increased financial burden. Proponents of the union thus called for “the exercise of our strongest thoughts, purest harmony, fullest consecration and unlimited devotion.” Disunity, they argued, would lead to failure. While they admitted that the AME Church, “should not assume responsibilities that are beyond our capabilities,” they stressed that no one could know the full extent of united Christian forces. The power of Christian unity was, in a word, “unfathomable,” and only faith in God could allay fears that the church was taking on more than it could reasonably handle.

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“Will we allow our zeal to annul our common sense?” Payne asked rhetorically in an essay published in the April 1885 number of the AME Church Review. The essay was a companion to another essay that Payne had submitted under the same title, “The Past, Present, and Future of the AME Church,” and in it Payne continued his protest

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113 On the fifth day of the BME General Conference, Bishop Campbell had donated a total of $150.00 to the missionary endeavors in St. Thomas and British Guiana as a sign of good will. The AME Church, however, had no money to fund the Caribbean missions.
116 The AME Church Review was first published in July 1884. It was edited by Tanner and received much acclaim for the scholarly works it published from leaders like Bishops Payne, Campbell, and Holly, all of
against the majority of AME leaders’ desires for expansion.\textsuperscript{117} In seven short pages, Payne exhorted the church to think reasonably about foreign missions. “It has been said that ‘we need no money,’ ‘trust in God,’” Payne wrote, “But behind [the audacity of faith], there is the well-known fact that...any daring white man can obtain money for any enterprise he may undertake...we have no such source of moneyed help behind us.”\textsuperscript{118} If AME leaders had any pending doubts about the recent BME union and the church’s decision to make Haiti self-supporting, Payne presented several reasons why the AME Church should not rush ahead with its missionary plans in the British Caribbean and Africa.

Payne was explicit when he stated the main problem facing the AME Church; as a black institution, the church had limited access to funds and was not in a position to better its circumstances, especially when it came to the missionary cause. “Those among us who are in sympathy with the missionary movement of the age, have little or no

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\textsuperscript{117} Payne’s original protest from December 1880 was reprinted in the \textit{Christian Recorder} in fall of 1884. See “My Opposition to the Proposed Organic Union of the BME Church,” \textit{Christian Recorder}, November 13, 1884. His thoughts were additionally printed in his history of the AME Church, Daniel Payne, \textit{History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church} (Nashville: Publishing House of the AME Sunday School Union, 1891) 491-492. Some Canadian members of the BME Church also protested the union. See “Resolutions offered by the Trustees,” \textit{Christian Recorder}, October 9, 1884.
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money," he stated.\textsuperscript{119} He knew that the church’s constituency, in the majority, consisted of poor wage laborers and ex-slaves. These members had little access to money even if they wanted to give more to the church. Some of them even struggled to provide the yearly dollar offering required of every AME member. Payne also provided a candid, scathing critique of those who did have money at their disposal: white Christians. “White Christians, who count their moneys by hundreds of thousands, and tens of millions, will not give to the noblest Christian enterprise, if black men are to lead it.”\textsuperscript{120} Payne stated. “I do not deal in imagination. I am uttering the irrefutable facts of history.”\textsuperscript{121} AME bishops and ministers had tried to garner white support and failed time and again. According to Payne, white Christians only gave “as rich men, generally give to beggars, a few cents or quarters or dollars.”\textsuperscript{122} The implication was that the church had to rely on its own people to support missions—people who could barely support the AME Church’s institutions in the United States, including its much beloved college, Wilberforce.\textsuperscript{123}

If the current impoverished state of the AME Church’s schools and college were not enough of a deterrent to AME expansionist leaders, Payne argued that the unfinished business of the Haitian missions should serve as another reason for caution.

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., 318.
\textsuperscript{123} Payne was a professor at Wilberforce.
If the AME Church was “too poor to attempt to establish more than one college at a time,” then the same rule applied for missions.\textsuperscript{124} Payne thus believed that AME leaders should, “demonstrate their wisdom by making one mission strong and self-supporting before they attempt to establish another.”\textsuperscript{125} In Payne’s mind, it was ludicrous to leave Haiti behind for Africa. “Shall we arrest our efforts [in Haiti], and in saying, ‘The mission is self-supporting,’ rush into the African Continent? My response is, No!” he wrote.\textsuperscript{126} Payne then called the church to build up four missionary stations in Haiti and three in the Dominican Republic.\textsuperscript{127} “We shall then have some assurance of strength and stability in the island,” he reasoned.\textsuperscript{128} With AME missions firmly established in Hispaniola, they church would then be able to move on to Africa from a position of strength, having completed one task well before moving on to the next. At this unknown point in the future, the AME Church would be able to truly describe the Hispaniola mission as self-supporting.

Payne clarified to the readership that the term “self-supporting” should not be taken lightly. To be truly self-supporting a missionary station, at minimum, had to be able to “pay the annual expense of pastor or pastors, and also sustain an able corps of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 314.
\item \textsuperscript{125} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{126} Ibid., 316.
\item \textsuperscript{127} Here Payne refers to the whole island when he writes of Haiti. He states, “Let us not cease our efforts in Hayti, till we shall be able to say in truth, that we have at least, three successful, self-supporting missions on the French part of the island, and three on the Spanish part, better still, say four on the French part and three on the Spanish part,” Ibid. Payne believed that seven stations would make a holy number of missions.
\item \textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
teachers and education of heathen children and youth.” At best, the station would also include “a physician, a mechanic, an agriculturist and a linguist, better still, a philological linguist, if one such person could be secured.” These words make it clear that in Payne’s mind, duty to Haiti and Santo Domingo did not cease with the erection of an iron church in Port-au-Prince. “The AME Church ought not to attempt to establish a mission in Africa until she has made her mission in the island of Hayti a grand success,” Payne stated. There was still much work to be completed in Hispaniola.

Besides the stated financial constraints and the principle of finishing one project before beginning another, Payne also saw Haiti as an open mission field when compared to Africa, where white denominations were already evangelizing. Payne explained, “Africa is cared for by the strong churches of European and American Christianity. These strong churches, through the rich missionary societies which represent them, are now spending millions of dollars upon Africa to Christianize and civilize her.” White denominations, however, had not yet invested in substantial missionary endeavors in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. This fact led Payne to conclude that, “Hayti needs our immediate aid, as Africa does not.” He beseeched the AME Church to “fritter not

129 Ibid., 314.
130 Payne stated that that two linguists would be even better.
131 Ibid., 314-315.
132 Ibid., 315.
133 Payne cited the Wesleyans as the exception. It should also be noted that the Baptist and the Episcopal denominations were already present in Haiti.
134 Ibid.
away her small purse upon things and upon peoples cared for by the rich, powerful and
wise churches of Christendom,” and to continue to support the Haitian mission.\textsuperscript{135} To go
into the British Caribbean would be a waste of the AME Church’s resources since the
objective of Christian missions was to convert the “heathen and semi-heathen lands”—
not compete, and thus hinder, those who were already fulfilling the Great
Commission.\textsuperscript{136}

In stating his belief that the church should avoid extending into already-occupied
regions, Payne critiqued the AME Church’s expansion into the British Caribbean.
According to Payne, the English Baptist, the Wesleyan Methodists, and the London
Missionary society were white British institutions that “have been caring for the English
West Indian Islands for…50-100 years.”\textsuperscript{137} These denominations had started churches,
schools, and Sunday schools, and were continuing to financially support their
institutions in the Caribbean. As white British institutions, they ostensibly did not
discriminate according to race, serving both black and white children. British schools
and churches were mixed (unlike those in the United States) and Payne believed that
African descendants in the British Caribbean had free access to both education and God.
These beliefs led him to question the AME Church’s purpose for extending to the
Caribbean. “Why should the poverty stricken AME Church of the United States rush

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., 318
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 314.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., 318
into those islands to meddle with the work, which naturally, politically and socially belongs to English Christians?” Payne asked.\textsuperscript{138} It made no sense to attempt to Christianize already-Christianized people.

Payne’s words about the British Caribbean were an implicit critique of the recent organic union with the BME Church. “We therefore warn the leaders of the AME Church against the Don Quixotic idea of ‘Ecclesiastical Imperialism,’” he stated, using the term that had formed the basis of his and Holly’s critique of union in 1880-1881.\textsuperscript{139} In case anyone had not read his protests against the union, he reminded the church that ecclesiastical imperialism was “the intention of making African Methodism embrace the world—of bringing every negro on the earth under our Discipline—controlled by our Government.”\textsuperscript{140} Instead of unifying the church, Payne believed that this goal would be “the beginning of our disintegration,” and encouraged AME leaders to “be humble in our opinions concerning our denominational greatness and power.”\textsuperscript{141} To do otherwise was “religious insanity.”\textsuperscript{142} In Payne’s mind, it made no sense to support the newly acquired missions in the British Caribbean if it meant the detriment of the church’s work in the United States and Hispaniola. The AME Church had committed itself to work for which it was not prepared nor, as Payne claimed, divinely commissioned to complete.

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., 319.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 319-320.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 319.
2.4 Conclusion

The BME union, Haitian missions, and the future of the AME Church’s missionary department rested in the ideological and theological debates that took place between Payne and other AME officials between 1880 and 1884. As the senior bishop representing an older generation of leaders and ideological thought, Payne was unable to convince a younger generation of leaders to temper their goals and expectations for AME missionary expansion. Even when Payne stated his support for African missions, Tanner, Campbell, and others ignored his warning regarding church finances and the possibility of a failed mission in Hispaniola. For these leaders, Payne’s ideology and methods were outdated—even sinful—because they did not respond to the call for racial unity in the face of oppression. Indeed, Payne’s and Holly’s theological interpretations and ideological views on missionary work ran counter to a new form of U.S. black nationalism that sought not the strengthening of black nations as an end goal, but the strengthening of the black race through AME missionary expansion and race-conscious solidarity.

Payne’s critique of the BME union did not mean that Payne was totally opposed to expanding AME missions. Indeed, Payne supported African missions insofar as plans for missions took into account the preparation needed to take on such an endeavor. Payne even suggested that the AME Church send enough men and money to Africa to support a mission on the continent for one to three years. He also called the church to raise $10,000 to begin missions on the banks of the Congo River, which he stated should be “part of our future employment as a denomination.” Ibid. Payne thus conceptualized African missions as a vital and important part of the AME Church’s future. French and Spanish Haiti, however, remained both the denomination’s past and present.
Yet, whether or not the new generation’s race-conscious evangelical message would resonate with African descendants across the Caribbean and Africa had yet to be tested. While debates about the organic union and foreign missions were taking place in the United States and Canada, the AME missionary station in Santo Domingo was reorganized. Unaware of the financial problems that the AME Church was facing in Haiti, leaders within the African American emigrant community were hopeful as they rejoined the church of their forefathers. Within years, however, the very questions that were debated so rigorously among North American AME leaders would reach Santo Domingo.
3. Traversing Space, Connecting Race: AME Networks of Survival in the Circum-Caribbean

On May 29, 1887, news spread that the elderly Protestant bishop, Rev. Jabez Pitt Campbell of the AME Church in the United States, was visiting Santo Domingo. Both civilian and state authorities had received the seventy-two-year-old minister and his companion, the missionary department (PHFMS) secretary Dr. James Matthew Townsend, who were now attracting the attention of the city’s residents as they left the morning Catholic mass. Stopping in front by the small Protestant chapel, the scores of curious onlookers could find no place to sit or stand so they gathered outside to watch the two American ministers ordain a handful of Dominican residents. It must have been an exciting and strange moment for all who attended—for who had ever before seen a black bishop lead a Protestant religious service blocks away from the Catholic cathedral in Santo Domingo?

The sequence of events leading up to this unique moment in Dominican history reveal the complex ways that American AME leaders’ decisions and actions influenced the formation of black Protestantism in Santo Domingo and across the Caribbean. The reestablishment of the AME connection in Santo Domingo in 1882; the construction of an AME building in Port-au-Prince in 1884; and the founding of the AME denomination in

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British Guiana, St. Thomas, and Bermuda in 1885 were direct results of the expansionist politics of AME Church leaders like Campbell and Townsend, who found themselves ordaining a handful of poor Dominican residents among a throng of curious spectators one Sunday in 1887. Still, AME leaders’ ideology and intentions to grow African Methodism in the Caribbean did not match the denomination’s financial capabilities. The ordination ceremony described above represents a unique moment of diasporic contact. It was the only time in the nineteenth century that an AME bishop set foot on Dominican soil; it would remain so for decades following.

Whereas the last chapter examined the expansionist ideas, theological debates, and fundraising efforts in the United States that drove AME foreign missions in the early 1880s, this chapter analyzes the effects of an ideological project devoid of the AME Church’s financial assistance. In the pages below, I use biography and reports of special events to trace the founding and early development of AME congregations in Santo Domingo, Haiti, and the broader Caribbean as AME missionaries sought aid from AME leaders in the United States, local governments, and wealthy philanthropists and built ties with non-AME missionaries and local preachers. Ultimately, I demonstrate that the AME Church’s beginning in Santo Domingo was not merely an exogenous endeavor, but emerged from an intertwined network of patronage and friendship that operated throughout the circum-Caribbean. Such networks of survival at times involved
American AME leaders like Campbell and Townsend, but they by no means existed as ones that such leaders directed or controlled.

3.1 Establishing Ties: The U.S. Consul and the Protestant Congregation of Santo Domingo

The founding of the AME Church in Santo Domingo began when Henry C.C. Astwood returned to Santo Domingo as an AME minister and the newly appointed U.S. consul in 1882 after eight years in the United States. In his first years as consul, Astwood proved his dedication to his office by advancing American business interests and negotiating trade deals between the United States and the Dominican Republic. Almost simultaneously, Astwood became involved in an effort to establish a Protestant church in the nation’s capital. His dual role as U.S. Consul and AME minister ultimately facilitated the Dominican government’s support for the construction of a Protestant church building in the heart of Santo Domingo.²

Astwood took charge of the U.S. consular office on April 13, 1882 after a weeklong trip aboard the steamship S.S. Geo W. Clyde.³ Upon his arrival he found that the “furniture and general appearance of the office [was] not in keeping with the dignity

² Astwood’s tenure as U.S. Consul from 1882-1889 is intriguing because of the various accusations of fraud that cast shadows over his office, including his attempt to lease Christopher Columbus’s bones to a U.S. businessman in 1888. The scandalous rumors surrounding Astwood are discussed in the next chapter.
³ The George W. Clyde steamship was the only steamship that ran between Santo Domingo and New York during the 1880s.
and standing of our government.” The small room was furnished with a table, a bookcase, a pigeonhole rack and stand, a wardroom, six chairs, and a broken safe. Among the various books, papers, and reports left by the last consul, Mr. Paul Jones, was an obsolete map of the United States. These outdated trappings were an apt symbol of a consulate that waned in significance when compared to other U.S. diplomatic offices in Haiti, Cuba, and Trinidad. Astwood, however, was determined to make the best of his promotion. Writing to the State Department that the current office “cannot be further controlled,” he set out to find a new location for the consulate. Within weeks, Astwood had moved to a “more central and convenient place.” Over time he would work to transform the subordinate status of his Dominican post, but for now the relocation of the U.S. Consulate was a first symbolic step in a series of modifications that Astwood proposed in order to improve American-Dominican relations.

By 1882, much had changed in the Dominican Republic since the U.S. Commission’s tour over a decade earlier. Indeed, Astwood found himself on the front end of sweeping economic transformations that he wrote about in letters to the U.S.

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7 Other modifications that Astwood proposed included increased trade, especially between New Orleans and Dominican ports; increased investment in Dominican infrastructure; and raising the prestige of the Dominican Republic by removing the U.S. consulate from under the hierarchical control of the U.S. Haitian consulate.
State Department. In the early 1870s, tobacco was the country’s primary export. It was harvested in the Cibao, the north-central plains region of the country, and was exported to Europe from Puerto Plata. By 1882, however, sugar was taking over the export economy. Unlike tobacco, sugar was produced on plantations, the majority of which were located in the southeastern region of the island. According to Astwood, the United States was the sole consumer of Dominican sugar, and the production of sugar was so large in 1882 (160,538 lbs.) that he estimated $500,000.00 in revenue. This estimate did not include the sugar plantations in the north in Puerto Plata and Samaná, which were also faring well due to American machinery that made sugar production more efficient. Astwood claimed that it would be “impossible for the Steamship Clyde to take the quantity [of sugar] now on hand.”

The industry was growing so rapidly that the infrastructure of the country could not keep up. He suggested that Americans invest in transportation infrastructure in order to bring sugar and other Dominican products to U.S. ports.

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In Astwood’s opinion, American investment in the Dominican Republic would enable the United States to control both the country’s exports and imports. The island produced many products—especially sugar, tobacco, coffee, and tropical fruits—that would earn valuable profits in the United States. The Dominican government additionally offered investors cheap land and low taxes, and regularly made lucrative concessions to foreign capitalist who were promised monopolies over certain industries in exchange for their investments in modernizing the country’s infrastructure and agricultural sectors. With low start-up costs and a ready consumer market in the United States, Astwood believed that investment in the Dominican Republic would yield high profits. At the same time, increased trade would guarantee an open market for American products on the island. In fact, by 1882, American goods already represented the majority of Dominican imports. During the fiscal year ending in June 1882, for example, the total imports amounted to $881,679.18. The United States was responsible for more than two thirds of that sum ($513,619.45), dominating every product that the Dominican Republic imported except rice and cheese. Thus, Astwood believed that the United States had the potential to dominate all imports and assert its power in the region at the expense of its European competitors.10

Astwood was not the only one to see the potential. A handful of American capitalists had already sought government concessions for modernizing transportation. For example, a U.S. citizen, Mr. Hall, received a grant to build a railroad between Azua, a province west of the capital, and Santo Domingo. Astwood reported that he had arrived in the country along with engineers who were already surveying Azua for the purposes of building the railroad. Another man, Mr. W.M. Hinman of Boston was also seeking a concession for the fort of Azua, which was “designated as a port of entry for the exportation of sugar.” Hinman predicted that with the land grant, “a very large amount of capital will be expended in that section for the development of sugar by American capitalists.” The sugar industry was also succeeding in Puerto Plata, where the Lithgow brothers were building a wagon road that would connect the northern port city to Santiago. About ten miles had already been completed. Work was also progressing on a railroad connecting Santiago to Samaná, which would inevitably facilitate trade among the principle cities of the north. According to Astwood, this investment—along with the developments in the sugar industry—proved that the Dominican Republic was destined to become “one of the most important [islands] in the West Indies.” As the U.S. consul, Astwood was determined to strengthen the

11 H.C.C. Astwood to William Hunter, Santo Domingo, April 14, 1882.  
12 Ibid.  
13 H.C.C. Astwood to F.T. Frelighuysen, September 30, 1882.
connections between the United States and the Dominican Republic so that his friends—both American and Dominican businessmen and government officials—would benefit.

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Astwood’s work in the Dominican Republic was not limited to his diplomatic duties, but he also attempted to influence the religious sphere of Santo Domingo. Writing to the AME Church in the United States, he described the current state of religion in the country. When Astwood arrived in 1882, the Catholic priest, Fernando Arturo de Meriño, was president and was popular among the masses of Dominicans, who like their chief executive leader were also Catholic. “Seventeen structures dedicated to this formidable machine of the [Pope] testify to the fealty of the inhabitants,” wrote Astwood. Among the buildings was the large stone Cathedral that sat at the center of the city and housed the recently exhumed bones of Christopher Columbus. It seemed that there was no place for Protestant doctrine within the walls of this colonial Spanish-Catholic municipality where the people practiced “hereditary Catholicism.” “Shame to Protestantism, that until now no church edifice of that denomination adorns the precincts of the grand old city,” wrote Astwood to the Christian Recorder, “Let African Methodism be the pioneer.” Undoubtedly, Astwood saw himself as the harbinger of American Protestant missions in Santo Domingo.14

Yet, it was not completely true that there were no signs of Protestant activity in city. In fact, if one looked hard enough, remnants of a former time when Protestants gathered weekly for meetings could be found, “twice a month on moonlight nights at a private house.”¹⁵ There, under a thatched roof cottage and upon mud floors, a few old Methodists, descendants of black emigrants from the United States in 1824, met for prayer and worship in the Methodist tradition. These were the men and women that elderly African Methodists in Philadelphia and New York still remembered, but whom it seemed that AME Church leaders had forgotten despite the sporadic correspondence between the Santo Domingo immigrants and leaders in the AME Church in the 1870s.¹⁶

Astwood met these Protestants, including the elderly Elijah R. Gross, soon after his arrival in Santo Domingo, and learned of the dire state of the congregation first-hand. In the decade since the Santo Domingo Protestant community petitioned the AME Church for aid in 1872, the building where they worshiped had fallen into further disrepair; it was impossible to hold services in it. The Protestants had tried to collect money for repairs, but they ran out of funds in 1878.¹⁷ The instability of the country that

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¹⁵ Ibid. The house most likely belonged to Francois Cladio whose grandfather had moved his whole family to Haiti in 1824. Cladio claimed that he hosted the group when they had no official meeting place. “The Foreign Missions of the AME Church,” *Christian Recorder*, January 19, 1888.

¹⁶ The scores of people leaving northern docks for Haiti in the 1820s was not easily forgotten among those who remained in the United States. Yet, it was not until 1890, for example, that AME Bishop Wayman made contact once again with his long-lost sister who had lived in Santo Domingo for over sixty years “Personals,” *Christian Recorder*, December 4, 1890.

¹⁷ Joseph Prior to M.C. Osborn, April 22, 1880, *Methodist Missionary Society Archives*, Microfiche, General Commission on Archives and History, United Methodist Church.
year also thwarted their plans. According to Astwood, the congregation was “almost obliterated,” by disease and only a few immigrants and their descendants remained in the capital in 1882. Elijah Gross, who Astwood called “Old Father Gross,” led these members in worship, but Gross had become “old and feeble.” Once a dynamic leader and a former member of the AME Church in Philadelphia, Gross had never received “encouragement or help from abroad” and “had to abandon the work almost altogether.” Having promised one of the Bishops of the AME Church that he would “do all in my power to help the work on here,” Astwood pledged to reestablish the connection to the AME Church in the United States.

For the Protestants of the city, Astwood’s arrival renewed the hope that their congregation would survive. Only two years before his arrival, a Wesleyan missionary, Joseph L. Prior from Grand Turk Island, had failed to obtain financial aid from the London Missionary Society for their congregation. At that time, Prior described the

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19 García states that the population succumbed to typhoid. José Gabriel García, Compendio de la historia de Santo Domingo, 3rd ed., vol. 2 (Santo Domingo: Imprenta de García Hermanos, 1894), 122.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid. It should be noted that Astwood’s version of the immigrants’ history differed from the story that members of the community told only a decade prior in their 1872 letter to the United States. Astwood stated that the Wesleyans, not the AME, led the group: “Years ago, the Wesleyans had a considerable footing here; the congregation was made up principally of colored Americans from the United States, who emigrated here over forty years ago. In 1867 a disease visited here said to be the cholera; it did not spread beyond the walls of the city, but nearly all of these people became victims to this dread monster and the church was crippled. The Wesleyans abandoned the field soon after, and the church is almost obliterated.”
Dominican Republic as “a glorious field” and asked that the Wesleyan missionary board send a Spanish-speaking English minister to the capital. He believed that such a man could minister to both Anglophone and Spanish-speaking Dominicans, who he believed would join the Wesleyan church once the mission was properly financed. Already stationed in the Turks island, Prior was not able to do the work himself. Yet, he and everyone else had hoped, to no avail, that help from London would be the answer to their prayers.23

Prior’s assessment of the Protestant congregation in 1880 provides further insight into the congregation’s needs and the parishioners’ eagerness to receive help from abroad. According to Prior, he and one Mr. Grofs from Samaná had estimated that the repairs, which included a new roof, floor, and pews, would cost £120. If the London Missionary Society agreed to send a missionary, Prior reported that the Protestant community in Santo Domingo (about fifty people) had promised to contribute to the proposed minister’s salary. Even the governor of Santo Domingo, Ulises Heureaux, was eager to aid the efforts. Having received his education from Wesleyan missionaries in Puerto Plata, Heureaux “promised for himself and his government to assist in any and every way whatever effort may be made by us to extend our work in the Republic.”24

23 Joseph Prior to M.C. Osborn, April 22, 1880, Methodist Missionary Society Archives, Microfiche, General Commission on Archives and History, United Methodist Church.
24 Ibid. Prior reminded Osborn that Heureaux was the governor of Santo Domingo and had been educated in the Mission School in Puerto Plata under the Wesleyan missionary, Rev. Towler.
The outpouring of support encouraged the young minister in his petition. “I should very much like to see that city (the oldest in the Western World) reoccupied by us as a Central Mission Station,” he stated. For Prior and the Protestant congregation, it was not difficult to imagine that, with a little financial help, the Protestant church could have, “a number of prosperous churches” in Santo Domingo.25

The belief that Protestantism would thrive in Santo Domingo with a little financial support was echoed by Astwood in 1882 when he set out to aid the Protestants of the city. The eagerness of the local congregation and the fact that Ulises Heaureaux was elected president of the Republic in August 1882 facilitated Astwood’s work on behalf of the congregation. Astwood reported in a letter that he, “took hold of the work with the old man [Gross]” and “procured a decent place and started our Sunday school and the church.” Astwood described the rental space as being, “comfortably seated with chairs, which I bought on credit and are now nearly paid for.” The congregation also bought an organ worth sixty-five dollars. Within a year, the parishioners’ expenditures, “reached about $25 a month.” In Astwood’s mind, the only thing left to do was to officially affiliate with the AME Church and mobilize the AME denomination in the United States to support the congregation by sending a minister and financial assistance.26

25 Ibid.
3.2 Building Support: Commissioned Men and Fundraising Efforts for Hispaniola

As discussed in Chapter 2, raising money for AME missionary work was a difficult task. As Tanner, Townsend, Campbell and other American AME leaders advocated for the missionary cause in Haiti, a handful of AME missionaries also sought financial aid from African Methodists in the United States. Unsurprisingly, their efforts were not rewarded with the money they desperately needed. Their stories, however, demonstrate the important role that these Afro-Caribbean men played in propagating the missionary message in American AME churches; such work did not belong to prominent, episcopal leaders alone.

Despite the exciting beginnings of AME organization in Santo Domingo, by the end of 1882, Astwood felt disheartened. Since his arrival he had received little correspondence from AME leaders in the United States. He cited his experience requesting AME literature as an example. In 1882, he had appealed to the AME Publishing Department for the Child’s Recorder, but the department only sent fifty copies of back orders. “Not hearing anything more from Bishop Campbell, I became very much discouraged,” he wrote. Astwood felt additional pressure as his duties as a preacher and U.S. Consul increased. Beyond his diplomatic work, Astwood’s duties included leading church services every Thursday and Sunday evenings, as well as Sunday

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Ibid.
mornings. “It is hard work, all of the duties developing upon me,” he claimed in February 1883. He then requested that the AME Church “come to the rescue” and send a missionary to Santo Domingo, stating that it would cost “one-half of the trouble and expense attending the work in Haiti.” No response to his letter was printed in the *Christian Recorder*.28

Facing poor communication with AME leaders throughout 1882, Astwood took a two-prong approach to garnering aid for the Santo Domingo congregation. First, he reached out to other institutions for help. The Foreign Sunday-School Association (FSSA), an organization founded in New York in 1879 became a key collaborator.29 The president of the organization, a white man named Mr. Albert Woodruff, provided Sunday-school materials that Astwood received on a regular basis in 1883. Such materials encouraged Astwood, but substantial financial aid was still needed. Second, Astwood advocated for AME mission in Santo Domingo while on sabbatical in the United States over the summer of 1883.30 His advocacy work led to his ordination as elder in the AME Church. It moreover instigated Astwood’s official appointment to

28 Ibid.
29 “The Sunday-School Work,” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, October 18, 1881. The FSSA was founded “for the purpose of establishing Sunday-schools in the countries of Europe and Asia.”
30 In the spring of 1883, Astwood visited New Orleans and New York, where he advocated simultaneously for a reciprocity treaty between the Dominican and American governments and AME missions in Santo Domingo. Astwood did not return to Santo Domingo until August 1883.
Santo Domingo as an AME missionary, and it motivated at least one AME congregation to host a fundraising meeting for Santo Domingo.

On July 14, 1883, Henry C.C. Astwood stood before two bishops of the AME Church for a second time after being ordained a deacon in 1880. Both gentleman, the Rt. Rev. John M. Brown representing the First Episcopal Conference and the Rt. Rev. William F. Dickerson of the South Carolina Conference, “wore the robes of their Episcopal office,” as they led the service that would make Astwood an elder in the AME Church. Standing tall in the Bridge Street Church of New York before a “large circle of friends, and co-religionists,” Astwood took in his surroundings and likely thought of his return to Santo Domingo as a fully credentialed pastor.31

The religious ritual was replete with the missionizing message. Following the organ’s prelude and prayer, the choir and congregation fervently sang the hymn, “Go Preach My Gospel, Saith The Lord.” The sermon delivered by Rev. Goosley, a visitor from the New Jersey Conference, was no less prescriptive, for it was based on Mark 16:15-16, “And He said unto them, go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Delivering the sermon extemporaneously, Goosley spoke about the rise of the Christian church, and “its gradual and sure advance all over the world.” He

31 “Ordained,” Christian Recorder, July 26, 1883. Rev. J.H. Stansbury, the pastor of the Bridge Street Church was also in attendance.
then “drew a striking picture between the nations which have accepted the Bible and their progress and those which have rejected the Holy Scriptures, and their consequent decay.” This message was crafted specifically for Astwood, for Goosley believed that Astwood had the chance to bring the Bible and the Christian Church to a nation in turmoil. Addressing Astwood alone, Goosley said “that he went doubly armed on his mission of Christianity, not only as the representative of a great government, but carrying the still higher authority of being able to proclaim the blessedness of eternal salvation to all who might believe.” The sermon was clear. Astwood was to be the AME Church’s representative in Santo Domingo, a duty that he solemnly accepted. Satisfactorily answering the “questions as to diligence, faithfulness and spirituality,” Astwood made an oath to serve God and his fellow man in accordance to the discipline and mandate of the AME Church.32

Astwood’s ordination and official appointment to the AME mission meant that he was responsible for the development and well-being of the Santo Domingo congregation. To that end, he helped to lead a fundraising meeting held in Bridge Street AME Church on Thursday, August 2, for the Santo Domingo mission.33 Much like Astwood’s ordination, the missionary theme was evident at the meeting. The meeting

32 Ibid.
33 It is possible that Astwood visited various AME churches where he presented lectures about Santo Domingo in the hopes of raising funds. In his “Letter from Santo Domingo,” he states that he had “purposed to come over and deliver a series of lectures in behalf of the church during my stay, under the lead of one of our Bishops, with grand results.” Yet, I only found reports of the meeting in the Bridge Street Church.
opened with the singing of the hymn, “From Greenland's Icy Mountains, from India’s Coral Strand,” the first stanza of which ended with the phrase, “They call us to deliver their land from error’s chain.” Then, the pastor of the church, Rev. William H. Thomas, led in prayer. He was followed by Astwood, who spoke of the Dominican Republic, its commercial trade with the United States, and its supposed need for Protestant religion.34

Astwood opened his speech by presenting Dominican history and his viewpoints on the country’s commercial potential. He explained that little was known about the Dominican Republic until President Grant had pursued annexation, but now “The Island of San Domingo is the most important one in the West Indies and it is the most beautiful.” Reportedly saying nothing of Haiti, Astwood claimed that the “island a great many years ago belonged to the Spanish Government,” and that “the inhabitants, being warlike and lovers of liberty, broke away from Spain and established a republic form of government.” He informed his audience that the Dominican government was financed by customs revenues, and that the recent growth of the sugar industry had attracted American capitalists and increased trade between the two nations. “The Business of the island has been changed from Europe to the United States,” Astwood stated. These facts were meant to inform the audience, and demonstrate that the establishment of a Protestant church in Santo Domingo would extend the work already being completed by

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34 “A Church Needed in Santo Domingo,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, August 3, 1883. The meeting was poorly attended due to rain. The absence of leaders such as Rev. J.H. Denich of Newark and W.B. Derrick of New York was noted.
Americans in Santo Domingo. “That is the commercial aspect of the island, and I am sure that people who believe in free government will take some interest in the moral status of the inhabitants,” Astwood concluded before discussing AME missionary work.35

In describing missions, Astwood emphasized the lack of Protestant activity in the country. He also stressed his personal role in reorganizing the Protestant congregation. “In the City of San Domingo to-day there is not a single Protestant church,” he reported, “God’s day is violated in every conceivable manner possible.” He then claimed that on the first Sunday night that he spent in Santo Domingo, he met Elijah Gross, who informed him that the congregation “had not collected a dollar in six years. The Protestants would not go to church.” Given the fact that the Protestants had begun to rebuild the church a few years before Astwood’s arrival, this statement was most likely an exaggeration. Yet, it enabled Astwood to portray himself as the champion of Protestant religion in the Dominican capital. “I went to work,” he stated, “and rented a house and furnished it with chairs. I collected money to pay for an organ and sent for it to America.” He further explained that when the organ came, the Protestants began to meet three times every Sunday. “It was a great success,” he said, “but we have no church of our own, and the people of San Domingo ask you to be the pioneers in

35 Ibid. At the meeting, Astwood described the Dominican Republic in the same way that he described the nation to businessmen in New Orleans and New York.
establishing the First Protestant Church in the oldest city in the New World.” Thus, Astwood asked his audience to invest in foreign missions.\textsuperscript{36}

The total amount that Astwood collected on behalf of the Santo Domingo congregation in 1883 is unknown, although his efforts were generally unsuccessful. The few people who attended the service that night pledged $16.00. It was “a good beginning,” as Astwood put it, but more was still needed. Rev. Thomas promised that another “missionary would be sent [to Santo Domingo] at an early date, and he called upon those present to contributed liberally to the work of Christianizing the island.” Plans were also made for another fund-raising meeting to take place at the Bridge Street Church in Astwood’s absence. Yet, whether this second meeting ever occurred is also unknown. Moreover, it is uncertain whether Astwood ever received the promised pledges. With Astwood’s return to Santo Domingo on August 22, 1883, news about the Santo Domingo congregation dissipated in U.S. newspapers as did the Dominican congregations’ hope for aid from the United States.\textsuperscript{37}

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Astwood was not the only AME minister from Hispaniola to face difficulty raising funds in the United States. While AME leaders finalized plans for the BME union and the iron-framed church for Haiti in 1884, two young men from Haiti, Adolphus H.\textsuperscript{36} In his speech Astwood stated that the women who attended the services regularly drew in the men. This statement suggests that the majority of the parishioners were women. \textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
Mevs and Solomon G. Dorce, graduated from the AME Church’s university, Wilberforce college, and traveled across the U.S. Midwest seeking funds from various AME congregations for the Haitian mission. Their experiences demonstrate the ways that Afro-Caribbean ministers attempted to build support for Caribbean missions despite the inability—and at times, reluctance—of American African Methodists to give to the missionary cause.

The twenty-first graduation of Wilberforce College in Ohio took place on Thursday, June 19th 1884. That morning three thousand people assembled in a “large camp-meeting tabernacle” on the western knoll of the college’s campus in Ohio. The attendees had traveled on foot and by horseback, carriage, and vehicle to see the graduating class of six men, who marched into the camp in a procession that included the faculty and trustees. Four of the ten AME bishops were present. Along with the choir, bishops Payne, Campbell, Turner, and Shorter sat on the stage facing the theological students and graduates, who one by one presented orations. The speeches ranged in theme, from topics on the history of African Methodism to the need for spiritual progress. Among the graduating class, Rev. Solomon G. Dorce of Haiti spoke on “Man’s Relation to Law.” His Haitian colleague, Adolphus H. Mevs, discussed, “Moral Improvement.” The favorited speaker of the occasion, Mevs “spoke in an earnest, feeling way,” and his words, “fell upon the audience as sweetly and as charmingly as the sweetest music.” The men’s speeches were followed by a selection
from the choir and the valedictory speech given by Rev. L.M. Beckett. Then finally, the college’s retiring president, Benjamin F. Lee, presented the diplomas to the young men, including the first two Haitian alumni of Wilberforce.38

The graduation was a much anticipated moment in AME missionary history. Four years ago, Mevs and Dorce had left behind family and friends to pursue education in the United States. The AME missionaries in Port-au-Prince, Rev. Charles and Mrs. Mary Ella Mossell, had encouraged Mevs and Dorce in their mission. The husband and wife pair desperately needed aid, and the plan had always been for the two men to return as missionaries to Haiti. Looking back on the moment of their departure, Mevs wrote:

“I set sailed from the beautiful, evergreen shores of Haiti... in order that I might fully equip myself to be a mighty instrument in the hand of the blessed Master to apostatize and thoroughly evangelize my fellow countrymen from the strong arms of Roman Catholicism, and from the darkness of heathenism.”39

For the Mossells and AME leaders in the United States who supported the Haitian missionary cause (e.g. bishop Payne, bishop Campbell, and Dr. Townsend), Mevs and Dorce represented the hope for Haitian salvation. Once ordained, the two men would


spread the church’s mission beyond Port-au-Prince, raising up Protestant congregations across Haiti.

Yet, the transition to the United States had not been easy. Both Mevs and Dorce had arrived without money to support themselves and with few friends to whom they could turn. Back then, Dorce did not even speak English and relied on Mevs for interpretation. Both men grieved the family and friends they had left behind with little promise of success in Ohio. Dorce wrote, “There was nothing that could be compared with the time I was leaving Port-au-Prince in 1880, when on board the steamer, about sixty persons were melted to tears at the departure of a son, a nephew, a brother, a cousin and a faithful friend.”

Writing of their arrival, Mevs also stated, “it was in very poor circumstances that I first entered Wilberforce University...in fact, upon a time it was a question with me whether at all I could have pursued my studies or no.”

The two men found friends among a select few AME leaders, including the president of Wilberforce, Benjamin Lee, who along with Payne, Campbell, and Townsend raised money to support Mevs and Dorce’s studies for four years. In 1884, the two Haitian ministers hoped that the same generosity would be extended to them as they journeyed home.

Lacking travel funds for their return trip to Port-au-Prince, Mevs and Dorce toured the Midwest after graduation. There, they preached in AME churches and took up offerings for their travels and the Haitian mission. In order to cover the most distance, the two men split from one another. Mevs visited churches in Ohio and Michigan while Dorce toured Indiana, Missouri, and Kansas.\(^{42}\)

Their efforts were met with limited success. Both men commended the ministers and churches that aided them in their journey. In Lima, Ohio, Mevs reported that he was received “with open heart and hands,” and “thrice welcomed by Rev. W.T. Maxwell, whose company I enjoyed so much.”\(^{43}\) Mevs offered similar praise for Brother Thompson of Ypsilanti, Michigan, of whom Mevs said, “I shall never forget him or the kind treatment I received while at his house.”\(^{44}\) Dorce also thought positively of his experiences. Of the AME Church in Richmond, Indiana he wrote, “I was so impressed with the kindness, the gentility and the socialite [sic] of the people, that I returned two or three times to see them.”\(^{45}\) Of St. Joseph AME Church in Missouri, he stated, “St. Joe has done more than any other church in the connection for the Haitian missions and more for me as an individual.”\(^{46}\)

\(^{42}\) Mevs and Dorce referred to these states as “the west,” but I refer to them as the Midwest for the sake of clarity. Mevs traveled to thirteen cities while Dorce traveled to over twenty cities and towns.


\(^{44}\) Ibid.

\(^{45}\) Solomon G. Dorce, “My Western Tour,” *Christian Recorder*, October 2, 1884.

\(^{46}\) Ibid.
Still, Mevs and Dorce did not raise much money. Mevs reported that after traveling a few weeks, he had only raised his traveling expenses and thus he “proposed to give up the struggle.” On the verge of quitting, only his faith and his memories of others’ kindness encouraged him to continue.\textsuperscript{47}

For Dorce and Mevs the positive experiences of being welcomed in churches across the Midwest offset the negative experiences of being treated poorly by a few ministers who opposed their efforts. Dorce refused to discuss the details in his letter, stating that some pastors, “might get offended at me for the manner in which I would paint their own actions.”\textsuperscript{48} Mevs, on the other hand, had no such qualms. “I am certainly opposed to the idea of concealing any such mean, low, contemptible principles existing in the Christian ministry or elsewhere,” he wrote.\textsuperscript{49} Mevs recounted that in Ann Arbor, Michigan the minister in charge, Rev. J. Hart, refused to receive him. According to Mevs, the minister had instructed his wife, Mrs. Hart, to turn Mevs away with the excuse that they had not received any notice of Mev’s arrival. “Nothing could astonish me more than this false statement,” Mevs wrote, “for while the lady in Sapphira-like attitude was

\textsuperscript{47} Mevs stated, “Remembering the blessed promise of God, which says: ‘Lo, I am with you always, even unto the ends of the world;’ and also of the kind treatment received,” I concluded that I would pursue my journey.” He then visited Ann Arbor, Jacoson, and Lansing. A.H. Mevs, “Notes by the Way,” \textit{Christian Recorder}, September 18, 1884.

\textsuperscript{48} Solomon G. Dorce, “My Western Tour,” \textit{Christian Recorder}, October 2, 1884. Dorce at least indicated who was rude to him. He wrote, “I will be brief and not speak of the actions of the former pastor of Bethel Church in Indianapolis, now presiding elder, neither of those of the pastor of Lawrence Church, in Kansas, towards me.”

delivering this treacherous message, my eyes were beholding the card that I had written to her husband, announcing my arrival and the cause I represented, lying upon the table.”50 Upon leaving the house, Mevs shook the dirt from his feet, as Jesus instructed his disciples. This example suggests that not everyone believed in the missionary caused and some ministers even directly opposed giving money to Haiti, an attitude that the bishops and other episcopal leaders constantly criticized.51

The ineffectiveness of Dorce and Mev’s tour delayed their journey home, and caused AME leaders to lobby for their support. In an article printed in the church’s journal, Payne stated, “I have asked myself, why did the Lord Jesus send these young men from Haiti to Wilberforce to be educated at the expense of the AME Church? Shall not the pockets of its members be opened to support these missionaries till they are able to support themselves?”52 This rhetorical question was reprinted in the Christian Recorder in August 1884. Yet, by early September, the two men still did not have enough money to travel.53 Just as raising the money for the iron church in Haiti had been an uphill battle, so too was fundraising to support Haitian missionaries.

50 Ibid. “Sapphira attitude” refers to the biblical story of Acts 5:1-11 when Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit and died immediately upon being discovered.
51 Dorce’s and Mev’s experiences in the United States reveal a divide between prominent AME leaders’ ambitions and poor ministers’ inability (and at times unwillingness) to finance leaders’ lofty goals.
52 “Missionary Items,” Christian Recorder, August 28, 1884.
It was not until the fall of 1884 that Dorce and Mevs were able to leave the United States for Haiti. Boarding a New York steamship, the Albino, for Port-au-Prince in October 1884, Dorce was the first to depart. Once aboard the ship, Dorce began to feel uncertain about his journey. He knew that he would miss his friends in the United States, and he could only hope that they would remember him in absence. So far, he did not have much evidence that they would. Of all the African Methodists in the city of New York, only Mevs, his countryman and classmate, had accompanied Dorce as he boarded the Albino. Describing the moment when Mevs left his side, Dorce wrote, “As he left, I commenced to think about how I was left, with no one to whisper to me 'Take the name of Jesus with you.’” Dorce felt utterly alone.54

An unexpected visit restored Dorce’s hope in his mission and perhaps hinted at a pattern that would become more apparent to Dorce and Mevs after their return to Haiti. At the moment of Dorce’s despair, Dr. W.B. Derrick of the Sullivan Street Church and his wife boarded the ship to see Dorce and wish him farewell. According to Dorce, Mrs. Derrick presented him with a gift that “seemingly told me that I was not friendless.” The Derricks then stayed with Dorce until the last moment, only descending when the steamer was about to depart. Reflecting on the Derricks’ kindness, Dorce at first felt confused. Why had the Derricks, a family he barely knew been so kind and generous

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54 S.G. Dorce, “Home Again,” Christian Recorder, November 27, 1884. Mevs had decided to stay another month in the United States in order to spend more time with friends in New York.
towards him? “Why such a great demonstration of love?” he wondered. After thinking it over, Dorce concluded that, “The answer that came was consistent. It is not only because they are Christian people, but also West Indians.” At the hour of his departure—a moment of certain anxiety—the people who offered the greatest form of solidarity were none other than an Antiguan minister and his wife, Afro-Caribbeans who understood the hardships that Dorce would face upon returning home.55

3.3 Sharing Spaces: The Construction of AME Churches in Haiti and Santo Domingo

While Dorce and Mevs lobbied for financial support in the United States, the AME congregations in Port-au-Prince and Santo Domingo began constructing Protestant buildings in the two nations’ capitals. Although little is known about the processes by which these buildings were constructed, ceremonies were held to celebrate the founding of the two churches. These celebrations demonstrate the ways that AME leaders and parishioners built friendship networks with politicians, businessmen, and missionaries of other Protestant denominations in order to garner local support for the AME Church. These relationships did not go without critique, but in the absence of the American AME Church’s support, Caribbean African Methodists formed peculiar friendships with local leaders.

Ibid.
Months before Dorce and Mevs returned to Haiti, the news of that the iron frame for the church would arrive from London in April 1884 had come suddenly, “like lightning,” to the AME congregation in Port-au-Prince.\(^{56}\) At once, Mossell and his congregation began preparations for a special ceremony in which they would lay the church’s cornerstone. Having invited the Haitian public to participate in the ceremony, the congregation decorated the grounds where the church would be erected, “the northeast corner of the large square called Marche Debout” where the market was located.\(^{57}\) They adorned the enclosed grounds with evergreens, covered it from the sun, and laid out seats to host the city’s inhabitants. Expecting a distinguished group of speakers, they also raised a platform where the orators would sit.\(^{58}\)

The event was not intended to be a “mere curiosity” but a ceremony in which all Haitians were invited to take part. On the day of the ceremony, a dense crowd of people gathered in the market square. As they entered the grounds and found their seats, they noted the host of reputable men upon the platform. Besides Rev. Mossell, the pastor of the church, the group included two other Protestant leaders: Rev. Picot, the Wesleyan missionary and superintendent of the Wesleyan Haitian district, and Rev. Dr. I. Love, an episcopal minister who had worked closely with James Theodore Holly.\(^{59}\) Several


\(^{57}\) “African Methodist Episcopal Church in Haiti,” *Christian Recorder*, June 19, 1884.

\(^{58}\) Ibid.

\(^{59}\) It should be noted that Holly was not in attendance. Love and Holly were at odds during this period, and Love had recently been dismissed from the Episcopal Church. While the details of the dispute are not
officers of the law and government, including a representative of the Presidency, also assembled on the platform. Among them, were:

“Mr. Lilavois, Judge of the Court of Instructions; Mr. L. Brown, Director of the Arsenal; Mr. Hiero, Chief of the Appeal Court Office; Mr. Molius Germain, Member of [the] Assembly; General Teanty, Commandant of the place; Mr. Desrouleause, Justice of the Peace;...and several other gentlemen of distinction.”

The presence of these men demonstrated that the AME Church had friends in high places in Haitian government. Such friendships also legitimized the event in the eyes of the public and made it easier for them to dismiss the Catholic priests’ warnings against the Protestants. As one observer opined, “A strong manifestation of sympathy with the cause seemed to pervade the whole assembly, everyone appearing determined to do his part in this important work.” The event was indeed a collaboration among various sectors of Haitian society.

The three Protestant ministers led the ceremony. The large participation of the Wesleyan and Episcopal ministers gave the sense that the ceremony was an ecumenical event, despite the fact that the church building was intended to be an AME Church. The


Mr. I.C. Pressoir, a merchant, was also present. “African Methodist Episcopal Church in Haiti,” *Christian Recorder*, June 19, 1884.

In his version of the story, Tucker states that people “were seen wending their way to assist in performing the ceremony, in spite of all the Romish priests’ excommunicants.” James Tucker, “A Voice from Port-au-Prince, Haiti,” *Christian Recorder*, August 7, 1884.

Ibid.
service began with a hymn led by Mrs. Mossell and a prayer uttered by Rev. Mossell. Yet, the person to announce the program for the event was not the Haitian Minister of Justice as originally planned, but Rev. Picot, the British Wesleyan missionary. After Mossell spoke again, all three Protestant pastors—Mossell, Picot, and the episcopal priest, Rev. Love—descended from the platform. Together, they laid the stone on the northwest corner of the grounds, burying it with the document and several contemporary Haitian, British, and American newspapers. The origins of these newspapers symbolized the inclusive nature of the service, which was led by Haitian, British, and African American ministers. When the ministers returned to the platform, Picot prayed, and Love, Picot, and Mossell all offered speeches before taking up a collection and dismissing the participants. The cooperation displayed at the ceremony indicated that the Protestants leaders and congregations in Port-au-Prince often worked side-by-side and saw themselves as part of the same team despite representing distinct denominations.

But this united effort did not please everyone. In August 1884, a member of the Haitian AME Church, James Tucker, faulted Mossell for including Picot in the ceremony. Tucker described Picot as a white man who “holds the opinion that the Negro

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63 When Mossell spoke a second time he discussed the purpose of the ceremony and the congregation’s confession of faith. Mr. I. Day, a trustee of the property, was then invited to read the document that would be buried with the cornerstone.

64 “African Methodist Episcopal Church in Haiti,” Christian Recorder, June 19, 1884.
is unfit for the ministry.” According to Tucker, “for this reason [Picot] will not ordain any of his able colored local preachers.” He accused Mossell of knowing Picot’s opinions about black ministers and yet still inviting him to speak before the assembly. To add insult to injury, when Picot preached, he spoke of the Wesleyan church and the work that the British were doing on the island instead of the AME Church’s work. Stating that “he could not give any account of [the AME Church],” Picot “went on presenting his own cause and taking this grand opportunity of profiting, so to speak, from the sweat of our brow” Tucker reported. In Tucker’s opinion, Picot’s speech and ignorance of the AME Church and the “colored American’s progress” undermined Methodism and African Americans’ and Haitians’ collective goal of uplifting the black race in Haiti.65

Tucker also considered the inclusion of Rev. Love to be a mistake. Although Love was a man of color and spoke eloquently about African Methodism, he was also a deposed minister in the Episcopal Church led by Rev. James Theodore Holly. Tucker accused Mossell of being “over-polite” in inviting Love, and reported that Love’s participation in the ceremony caused “much dissatisfaction among the well-wishers of Brother Mossell,” who questioned why a local preacher was not chosen in his stead. Tucker explained:

“Could not [some local preacher] have said a few words on Methodism rather than to have this deposed priest in our pulpit? Are we as an independent body, in full communion with churches

throughout the universe, to open our arms to receive a degraded priest in our pulpit that the Protestant Episcopal Church has thrown out as unfit for the ministry?”

This complaint critiqued the all-inclusive tone of the cornerstone-laying ceremony and implied that ecumenical cooperation weakened the AME Church’s mission in Port-au-Prince. Such cooperation did not only injure the denomination’s reputation, but it also discouraged the development of local Haitian preachers who were overlooked in the process. Tucker’s critique revealed a core contradiction in the inclusion of non-AME Protestant leaders in Port-au-Prince. In relying on such men for moral support, the AME Church’s leadership in Haiti undercut their message and praxis of racial uplift.

It is probable that Picot and Loves’ participation in the cornerstone-laying ceremony caused so much disaccord among the AME parishioners that Mossell was forced to invite speakers who could discuss the AME Church’s history at the church’s inauguration ceremony that took place months later. On the evening of July 13, 1884, hundreds of people once again crowded Marche Debout street. This time, however, they waited to enter a beautiful chapel elevated six feet above the level of the street and adorned with a gilded cross at the top of the steeple. From the front porch, the iron church had a perfect view of the water, and the large windows let in the ocean breeze. Inside, the charmingly decorated chapel was “draped with red and blue bunting” and a

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66 Ibid.

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canopy of white lace that enhanced the varnished wood panels and pews lined neatly to seat four hundred people. These decorations were intended to welcome the officials of government and the minister of the state of public worship, who attended that night to learn about the AME Church’s mission in Haiti and celebrate the inauguration of the Protestant chapel.\textsuperscript{67}

Unlike the previous ceremony, during the inauguration service the invited orators were careful to speak well of the AME Church. First, Mossell introduced a Haitian official, the deputy of the south coast of Haiti, who was a Protestant and often held Protestant services in Port-au-Prince. According to Tucker, this man, “made a beautiful discourse on Protestantism.”\textsuperscript{68} Next, Mossell spoke briefly on Jesus Christ’s sermon on the Mount. He was followed by Monsieur Paul Oashard, a local preacher of the Wesleyan body, who spoke of “the grand work” Rev. and Mrs. Mossell had completed and encouraged them to have faith in their work. Following Oashard, John M. Langston, the U.S. Consul of Haiti, gave a history of the AME Church and also praised the Mossells’ labors in Haiti. He stated, “Many a time, after the burning of the city in the last revolution, [Mossell] came to [me] without garments for himself and family.” He continued, “and what has he given [the Haitian people]? This very same temple which he inaugurates today.” Langston then echoed Oashard’s encouragement

\textsuperscript{67} A description of the chapel can be found in Tucker’s letter. Ibid.

\textsuperscript{68} Tucker only faulted the deputy for failing “to open the eyes of the Roman Catholics that are still in spiritual bondage.” Ibid.
to the Mossells to, “live by faith as Paul did.” Last, another local preacher, Monsieur Lilaias was invited to speak. Lilaias spoke about the inauguration of the temple and “craved the sympathy of all Protestant and Catholics to aid [Mossell] in the noble work of carrying on the gospel throughout the Island of Haiti.” Together the five speeches introduced the audience to the Protestant message and the AME Church’s history and place within Haitian society. The speakers celebrated the Mossells’ accomplishments and emphasized their belief that the building was a gift from African Methodists in the United States and Haiti who were working together with other local Protestants for the benefit of Haitian society.69

The comparison of the cornerstone-laying and inauguration ceremonies demonstrate that AME missionaries and preachers in Haiti navigated relationships that were at times beneficial and at other times detrimental to their goals of racial uplift. This practice reflected the fact that in Port-au-Prince, only a handful of Protestant missionaries were ordained and all missionaries worked in an environment in which they represented a religious minority. Thus, Dorce referred to Picot and Rev. Love as “friends and well-wishers,” and requested that AME leaders pray for all missionaries in Haiti.70 “Brethren, pray of the Haitian mission, pray that the Island may be evangelized,” he stated.71 Despite the fact that Picot and Love were controversial figures in the minds

69 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
of some Haitian African Methodists, when it came to making friends on the island, African Methodists forged local partnerships out of convenience, obligation, and necessity.

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Like Protestants in Port-au-Prince, the Protestants in Santo Domingo turned to both the Wesleyan and AME denominations for aid. Unlike their Haitian counterparts, however, the Santo Domingo Protestants never received financial support from the American AME Church. While thousands of dollars were spent on sending the iron church to Haiti in 1884, Astwood and the Protestant congregation of Santo Domingo planned to construct a church building in the Dominican capital. Unable to rely on the paltry funds that Astwood raised in the United States, the congregation sought aid from other sources.

The Dominican government was the Protestants’ first means of support. President Ulises Heureaux had promised to help the Protestants of the city by donating “a suitable plot of land wherever [Astwood] would desire.” Thus, the Protestants were granted the land where their old meeting place—a building in the old military barracks—was stationed. This land grant and the subsequent support that the congregation received from local Dominicans meant that the construction of the

Protestant church in Santo Domingo became a local endeavor dependent upon the Dominican government and public.

In a letter to the United States, Astwood described the process of reconstructing the Protestant church. His description emphasized the work completed on a local level. “Whilst looking abroad for a place to build a church, the Spirit said to me, ‘rebuild the walls of Jerusalem,’” he reported. He then described the chain of events that led to the construction of the chapel. “Sunday, the 6th of June, I called the church without scarcely a dollar. I selected five carpenters and three masons from our rank with two outside masons, and on Monday morning gave orders for the material,” he stated. To pay for the work, members of the congregation sought pledges from Dominican patrons—including members of the large Catholic and small Jewish communities in the capital. “As if by magic the building went on,” Astwood stated. With the backing of the Dominican government and local friends, the construction was completed within seven weeks.

In mid-August 1884, the Santo Domingo congregation held its own inauguration ceremony. Little is known about this religious service, but like the ceremonies in Port-au-Prince, the service in Santo Domingo was well attended. The small church could not hold the hundreds of people, including government officials, businessmen, and other prominent members of Dominican society, who gathered to witness the public

73 This is a reference to the first three chapters of the book of Nehemiah in the Bible, in which Nehemiah rebuilds the walls of Jerusalem.

74 “New York, September 17, 1884,” AME Church Review 1, No. 2 (October 1884): 175-6.
dedication of the first Protestant temple in Santo Domingo. Astwood exclaimed in describing the dedication of the church, “What a grand outpouring of Catholics and Protestants!” According to Astwood, “Had the building been four times as large it could not have contained all the people and the donations would have been quadrupled.” During the service, the congregation collected donations totaling $450.00, which went to pay part of the church’s debt for the construction. For the first time in the country’s history, the city’s Protestants had a place of their own—a place of worship funded almost entirely by the Dominican government and civil society at large.

The fact that Dominican government and civil society aided the country’s Protestants contradicts conventional understanding of the Dominican Republic as a strictly Catholic country. Yet, this event should not be dismissed as a peculiarity. While it may prove impossible to explain why the government and prominent members of Dominican society financially assisted in the Protestant church’s construction in 1884,

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75 It is likely that the congregation invited the whole city to an inauguration ceremony in the heart of the capital. Astwood and the other members of the congregation’s reconstruction committee, including Elijah Gross, François Cladio, I.J. Hamilton, and Charles H. Williams, specifically reached out to Dominican politicians and other influential leaders, who responded by showing up at the event. See “Carta de la comisión en representación de la iglesia, 13 agosto 1884,” Santo Domingo, Colección José Gabriel García, Archivo General de la Nación.
76 “New York, September 17, 1884,” *AME Church Review* 1, No. 2 (October 1884): 175-6.
77 The public dedication of the AME Church in Santo Domingo in 1884 is not remembered in the current historiography of Dominican Protestantism. Yet, the fact that the construction of the first Protestant Church in Catholic Santo Domingo was a communal effort that relied on government patronage and donations from elite members of Dominican society should not be forgotten.

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the public dedication of the AME Church in Santo should be understood within the context of broader, historic patterns of patronage within Santo Domingo and friendship networks among black Protestants in the circum-Caribbean. The construction of the church underscores the fact that black Protestants in Santo Domingo relied on a network of friends who financially sponsored their work when the AME Church in the United States did not.

When the congregation quickly outgrew its new church by 1885, church leaders continued their practice of appealing to a broad base of potential supporters. In a general letter to the American public, the congregation requested aid to build a larger church edifice than the recently constructed building. The letter was addressed to “The Christian ministry and the vast congregations they represent without respect to denominational difference,” and called upon “philanthropists and humanitarians,” to give between eight and ten thousand dollars to the church.78 Facing the fact that they had received no money from the AME Church, it is possible that Astwood and other members of the congregation believed that they would only receive such a large sum of money from white American Protestants, who had access to wealth.

Still, convincing white Americans to donate money for black missions in the Dominican Republic was not an easy task. The particular phrasing in the letter indicates

78 “An Appeal,” Christian Recorder, September 10, 1885. Astwood signed this appeal along with the congregation’s secretary, Charles Williams; treasurer, Fermin Hamilton; and trustee, Francois Claudio.
that the Santo Domingo congregation recognized the challenge, and shied away from explicitly stating that the congregation was part of the AME Church. Instead, they referred to themselves as the “Protestant church in this community.” They also stressed that the purpose of the church was to convert Catholics to Protestantism. They claimed that the new building would be, “the first Protestant Church worthy of the name in the oldest city in the New World,” and would stand against, “the scenes of vice and immorality…the error and superstition,” of the Catholic Church. Thus, the letter implied that an ecumenical missionary effort among American Protestant churches would lead Santo Domingo to a purer form of Christianity. It did not explicitly state that the congregation would remain part of the AME Church, but instead suggested that a non-determinant form of Protestantism would prevail in Santo Domingo.

For the Santo Domingo Protestant congregation, the process of building a Protestant mission in the Dominican capital was not as easy as the sermons preached in American AME pulpits and editorials published in the Christian Recorder made it sound. In the few years since Astwood’s ordination, the congregation had built its own church independent of American AME financial assistance. Yet, the congregation still struggled to secure consistent support from any larger entity. Moreover, it lacked the ecumenical cooperation that was evident, albeit contested, in Haiti. Thus, in some ways, the Santo

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Ibid.
Domingo congregation was worse off than other AME missions in the Caribbean. Still, the overall experience among Afro-Caribbean AME congregations was strikingly similar.

### 3.4 Navigating Networks: Traveling Ministers and Local Preachers

Astwood, Dorce, and Mevs were not the only Caribbean missionaries to tour American AME churches. In the fall of 1884, Rev. N.B. Stewart visited the northeast United States where he spoke to AME congregations of the BME missions he led in British Guiana and Trinidad.80 A supporter of the BME Church’s union with the AME Church, Stewart believed that merger demonstrated the AME Church’s “heartfelt love and courage,” and would lead to “the elevation of our caste,” in the Caribbean and South America.81 He praised the AME Church for its progress and encouraged everyone to “walk up composedly to the most perilous enterprises, and carry on manfully that which ought to be done for the uplifting to our people.”82 Stewart’s beliefs that missions would lead to racial uplift aligned with those of his American and Canadian colleagues in the AME and BME Churches. Yet, his experience of traveling the Caribbean a year later in 1885 tells another story—one in which, Afro-Caribbean ministers and lay

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80 A native of British Guiana, Stewart was selected by Bishop Disney circa 1880 to lead the British Methodist Episcopal congregations in Trinidad and British Guiana.
82 Ibid. Here Stewart engages the gendered language regarding missionary work that was typical of the period.
preachers became connected not only because of their beliefs in racial uplift, but also because of their collective experiences of hardship and neglect.

In December 1885, Stewart was on his way to St. Thomas to meet Bishop Campbell and Bishop Cain for the British West Indian annual conference when the small barge, The Elinor, was blown off course by a sea storm. Sailing freely for four days, the captain had no choice but to land the vessel in Port Royal, Jamaica—miles away from its original destination. When Stewart disembarked about a week before the Christmas holiday, he found himself penniless and stranded on an island far from family and friends. It took him another three weeks before he was able to make enough money to pay for the mail steamer from Kingston to Port-au-Prince, from whence he hoped to finally reach St. Thomas before returning to Guiana. No doubt the detour was far from what Stewart had expected, but the surprising turn of events serendipitously enabled the South American minister to meet potential AME preachers in Jamaica and the AME missionaries of Haiti, Rev. Dorce and Rev. Mevs.83

To sustain himself in Jamaica and buy his passage to Haiti, Stewart found work preaching in several churches in Kingston. Although the AME Church was not yet established in Jamaica, Stewart became acquainted with several of the ministers. He described them as “natives, both colored and white,” and remarked upon their

theological training in the Jamaican colleges founded by other religious groups. Some of these ministers, including two men by the names of Rev. Griffith and Rev. Douse, invited Stewart to preach in their churches. Although there is no existing record of Stewart’s sermons, his words inspired at least a few of the congregants. He wrote that one minister was, “anxious that [the AME] church should be established in Jamaica.” Another three men, young school masters trained in Jamaican colleges, “applied to be taken into the ministry.” Stewart planned to inform the bishop Campbell about these young men at the next annual conference.84

To Stewart, it seemed like the AME denomination could thrive easily in Jamaica if American AME leaders would send preachers to the island like they had to Haiti. Since it was customary practice to encourage native leaders to serve in their home islands instead of sending African American missionaries abroad, Stewart suggested that Rev. Miller, a minister of the Philadelphia Conference and a native of Jamaica, was the best man to lead a potential Jamaican mission. “Probably he may yet be able to meet the approbation of his people and be the instrument in doing some good for the Church,” Stewart wrote. With native leaders in charge of missionary work, parishioners followed one of their own—not a white man from the islands or Europe. AME missionaries were black Caribbean men who believed in the idea of racial uplift.85

84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
While the Jamaicans waited for a minister to be appointed to the island, Stewart proposed that Jamaica become part of the Haiti circuit. This proposal reflected Methodist evangelizing methods elsewhere. Stewart, for example, not only worked in Trinidad and British Guiana, but also led a missionary congregation among the small, English-speaking population in Dutch Guiana. Mossell and Astwood had also begun missionary congregations in the northern coast of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Thus, Stewart suggested a similar arrangement for Jamaica. Haiti was only a daytrip away from Kingston on the mail steamer, and with the appropriate amount of financial support, the superintendent of the Haitian mission, could travel between Jamaica and Haiti in order to help guide the young Jamaican preachers who wished to enter the AME ministry. Then, once enough interest was generated, the Jamaican church could become “self-supporting” and provide for its own minister. This trajectory had been the plan and hope for the other islands of the Caribbean as well.

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Stewart’s optimistic plans for Jamaica were most likely dashed when, after three weeks in Jamaica, he visited Haiti and witnessed the challenges facing the AME congregation in Port-au-Prince. During the ten days that Stewart spent in Haiti, he not only became friends with his hosts, Dorce and Mevs, but also found that they had much
to say about their experiences on the island.\textsuperscript{86} The Mossells had returned to the United States in April 1885, and the Haitian missionaries now worried about the denomination’s waning commitment to Haiti.\textsuperscript{87}

In Mossell’s absence, Dorce had taken over the AME mission in Port-au-Prince, which was growing despite the lack of continued investment from the United States. Dorce explained how the situation was both a source of pride and despair. With a congregation of eighty-five people, Dorce held three services every Sunday at 10:00 AM (French), 5:00 PM (English), and 7:00pm (French).\textsuperscript{88} These services did not include the Sunday School (which met at 8:00 AM on Sunday) and the 4:00 PM prayer meeting. During the week, the church also hosted another prayer meeting on Friday evenings and a service on Wednesday. These activities underscored the success of the AME church in the Haitian capital. Yet, despite this work, the AME Church in the United States did not support the Haitian mission. “Our church should do much more than what she has done, and become the leading church here,” Dorce stated, “but she cannot on account of her poverty.”\textsuperscript{89} While the other Protestant churches in Port-au-Prince received financial

\textsuperscript{86} It is possible that Stewart, Mevs, and Dorce may have been acquainted beforehand since all of them were living in the U.S. Northeast during the fall of 1884.

\textsuperscript{87} Smith reportes that the Mossells returned to the United States after suffering trauma during an insurrection in Haiti in 1883. Yet, it is more likely that they returned because Mrs. Mossell took ill. Mrs. Mossell died from illness on June 19, 1886. Jessie Carney Smith, ed., \textit{Notable Black American Women}, vol. 2 (Detroit: Gale Research, 1996), 485.

\textsuperscript{88} Dorce reported that the AME Church’s French evening service was the largest Protestant ceremony in the city. “A Word from Haiti,” \textit{Christian Recorder}, February 18, 1886.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.
aid and pastors’ salaries from wealthy white congregations, the AME Church received nothing. This neglect shamed the Haitian AME Church.\footnote{Dorce stated that, “The other denominations are encouraged by their mother churches in as much as they, from time to time, send them tracts, books, Sabbath cards for the children and papers for their ministers to read. Now who can tell me what the AME Church ministers have received?” Ibid.}

Dorce further explained the shame he felt in a letter to the AME Church in the United States written a month after Stewart’s visit. “We all, Church and State, think that the connection does not care for the Haitian mission,” he wrote. He then posed rhetorical questions, “Why should the AME Church missionaries be so neglected...You have nobly begun; do you wish to flinch now?” “Don’t think of that,” he demanded. Dorce’s questions and demands directly challenged the 1884 General Conference decision to make Haiti a “self-supporting” mission. As the elder bishop Daniel Payne had predicted, in deciding to focus the church’s resources elsewhere, AME leaders had crippled the missionary work in Haiti.\footnote{Ibid. For more information on Payne, see the second chapter of this dissertation.}

Dorce was encouraged in his critique by Stewart’s and Mevs experiences. Like the AME Church in Port-au-Prince, the two Guianese BME circuits and the Santo Domingo congregation were growing, but lacked financial support. Stewart, for example, had two assistants, Rev. J.E. Shepard and G.S. Martin, who led the two missionary circuits in Georgetown City and on the West Coast (near the Demerara River). In Georgetown the church had a Sabbath school and two day schools. There were
also two day schools and three Sabbath schools in the West Coast. According to Stewart, in one of the villages on the West Coast, “African settlers have been finishing a new chapel about 30 x 26 feet...They have also given to the church sixty-five rods of land in length and thirty rods in width, a part for a cemetery and a portion to put a mission house on.”

This work had been funded locally, and it is most likely that the Guianese congregations received no financial aid from the United States before January 1885 since the BME and AME union had just been finalized.

The situation in Santo Domingo was similarly another sore point. Before leaving Haiti in 1885, Mossell criticized the lack of financial aid for Santo Domingo. In a report sent in January 1885, Mossell stated that between Astwood’s arrival and December 1884, the congregation had bought lamps for $35.00 and Sunday School books and church literature for $200. It additionally supported the elderly minister, Elijah Gross (who was too old to work) with $350 to sustain himself; sent $60 of missionary money to the United States as part of the annual dues (dollar money); and repaired the old church for $1060.00. With the debt on the building totaling 610.00 in 1884, Astwood asked the AME Church to cover the remaining amount, but there is no evidence that any money

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93 In January 1885, Stewart was eagerly waiting a visit from an AME bishop. He hoped that the bishop would split the large West Coast congregation into two distinct bodies in order to stimulate more growth, but the bishop had not yet been able to visit Guiana.
was sent.\textsuperscript{95} In all, between 1882 and December 1884, the congregation’s costs rose to $2363.00. Mossell claimed that the totality of this sum was funded locally, for he accused, “More than twelve thousand dollars has been expended to aid the Haytien work, but no aid whatever has been extended to St. Domingo.”\textsuperscript{96} In September 1885, the editor of the \textit{Christian Recorder}, Dr. Tanner, echoed this complaint. Describing the Santo Domingo congregation as “self-supporting” he reminded his readers that the members of the AME Church in the Dominican Republic “have not received due recognition respecting their payments of Dollar Money.”\textsuperscript{97} Still, the PHFMS did not send money to Santo Domingo.

Both Dorce and Mevs understood the situations in British Guiana and Santo Domingo as part of their own plight. In Mevs’s case, he was so discouraged when he first arrived in Haiti in 1884, he stated that he “could not afford to write such discouraging news to the shame of all concerned.” Like Dorce, Mevs chastised American AME leaders. “My friends,” he wrote, “Haiti forms just as much a part of God’s great universe, which must finally be brought to Christ, as Asian and Africa. Hence why should we be more interested in the salvation of those countries than in this beautiful

\textsuperscript{95} “New York, September 17, 1884,” \textit{AME Church Review} 1, No. 2 (October 1884): 175-6. A second article stated that the congregation sent $55.00 dollars to the connectional church in the U.S., yet “the church has never contributed a cent towards their maintenance.” See “Hon. H.C.C. Astwood,” \textit{Christian Recorder}, March 27, 1884.


island of the Antilles?” According to Mevs, “Appeals upon appeals are being made in behalf of Africa, while Haiti and San Domingo are neglected.” Mevs reiterated this point with an example from his own life. In the summer of 1885, Mevs was appointed to take over the Santo Domingo congregation from Astwood. Yet, he was unable to leave Port-au-Prince because he did not have the money to travel. It was a delay that could have been solved if the PHFMS prioritized its Caribbean missions.98

Dorce also compared his experiences in Haiti to the work being done in other Caribbean islands, and understood Stewart’s and Astwood’s experiences as part of his own struggle. “Is it not sad and astonishing to hear that during the whole year of ‘85 no tracts, no books, no church papers and no money was sent to Bro. Stewart?” asked Dorce. Of Haiti, he reported, “If our dear and sympathetic friend, Bishop Holly, did not receive regularly and lend me, sometimes, the New York Freeman, I would be more ignorant than what I am concerning our Church.” Dorce concluded that, “the missionaries who are laboring [in Port-au-Prince] should be cared for; not only those in Haiti, but all the other missionaries as well, for they are those who are doing the greater part in the work of winning the world to the Lord.” The AME Church was reliant upon ministers like Stewart, Dorce, and Mevs, but these men could count on nothing but their faith and local friends to sustain them.99

99 Dorce stated, “The only thing that sustains and encourages me to press forward [in] the mission work is the assurance of my call and the large congregation we have here. As some of my friends look and see who I
On January 20, 1886, Dorce, Stewart and the Mevs family—including Rev. Mevs, his wife Ellabee, and their infant child—walked to the dock in Port-au-Prince, where the young Haitian family and Guianese minister boarded the French steamer, the *Saint Laureur*, and set sail for Santo Domingo and St. Thomas respectively. This time, Dorce was the one who stayed behind. As he watched his friends leave for their missionary posts, Dorce likely thought of the special connection that had formed between them. In a short time, Stewart had become integral to the Port-au-Prince community and many of the parishioners had hoped that he would stay. Mevs likewise was a great help to Dorce in the capital. Together, Mevs and Dorce had kept the Haitian congregation afloat after Charles and Mary Ella Mossell’s departure. Still, the connection between the three men was not only based on the work that they accomplished together, but also on their collective experience of poverty and neglect. Commending the small group “to the care of the God of the ocean,” Dorce could only hope that American AME leaders would listen to their call for help.***

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am neglected by, and without encouragement from, the Missionary Board of the AME Church, they have from time to time offered me positions that can bring me from $800 to $1000 a year; but when I attempt to entertain them, I fancy that I hear the words, ‘Woe is unto you if you preach not the gospel,’ therefore I resolve to bear my hardships with patience.” See “A Word from Haiti,” *Christian Recorder*, February 18, 1886.

100 As Dorce reported, “Everyone who understands the English language would like for [Brother Stewart to remain in Port-au-Prince.” Ibid.

101 Ibid.
On January 23, 1886, the Mevs family arrived in Santo Domingo, where Rev. Mevs took over Astwood’s duties and the Protestant congregation of the city received them with open arms. Writing to the United States, Mevs described the church upon his arrival. Like Haiti and British Guiana, the congregation was growing quickly. Mevs reported that there were forty-five full members and over one hundred attendees at church every Sunday. The current church building, constructed only a year and a half ago, could not hold the entire congregation. Dozens of children also took part in the church’s Sunday School, despite the fact that the congregation lacked a blackboard, maps, and books for educating the pupils. Considering this growth, and the fact that the AME Church was the “only Protestant Church here among sixteen others of the Catholic denomination,” Mevs stated, “we should be proud indeed of this mission and feel much more interested in it than in any of the others.” Santo Domingo was a place where Mevs, as others, estimated that the need and potential of Protestant missions were both high.

Still, Mevs’s hopes for Santo Domingo were cautious. Days before leaving Port-au-Prince, he and his wife had attended a “special English meeting” where the distinguished Rev. Jacob A. James Sr. of Samaná spoke to a gathering of Port-au-Prince’s

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102 When Mevs took over the pastoral duties in Santo Domingo, he became the primary leader of the congregation even though Astwood continued to represent the Santo Domingo congregation during his trips abroad. This arrangement relieved Astwood of his most taxing church responsibilities and enabled him to focus on his diplomatic work.

Protestants. The meeting was a moment of great hope, but also sorrow. The elderly Rev. James likely counseled Mevs as he prepared to leave for his post in Santo Domingo, a city that James had visited and knew well. Many of the parishioners who listened to James understood both the importance and gravity of Mevs’ quest. Shedding “tears of sadness,” these sympathizers wished Mevs Godspeed, “as he never tasted before the bitterness of the missionary field”—at least not on his own. It was a moment that Alphonso and Ellabee Mevs would likely never forget.

Now stationed in Santo Domingo, the young missionary expressed a sense of alarm. Not only had the AME Church abandoned its missionary station in Santo Domingo, but the Dominican capital lacked the ecumenical Protestant infrastructure to which Mevs was accustomed. Unlike Port-au-Prince or British Guiana, Santo Domingo did not have representatives from multiple Protestant denominations. Mevs thus perceived that “scenes of vice and immortality, profanity of the Lord’s day; error and superstition are more prevalent [in the Dominican Republic] than in Haiti.” He believed that there was “greater work to be accomplished among this people than among the Haitians,” and that the growth of the AME Church would encourage a greater sense of

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104 Jacob A. James Sr. was visiting Haiti for the Wesleyan District Annual Conference. While there are no detailed reports of this religious service, it likely that James informed Mevs of his experiences in the Dominican Republic’s capital and the state of the immigrant community there. He may have even prayed over the Mevs family and blessed their mission. It is also likely that he mentioned his son, Rev. Jacob P. James Jr., who like Mevs and Dorce had studied in the United States and was working as an AME minister in the United States. For more on Jacob P. James Jr., see the sixth chapter of this dissertation.

morality within the Catholic country. Antithetical to the distinction that elite Dominican drew between themselves and Haitians, Mevs’s assessment of Dominican religiosity reveals that in the 1880s outsiders often considered Haiti more highly than its sister country. For people who thought like Mevs, the Dominican Republic was closer to barbarism than Haiti because it lacked modern Protestant influence.\textsuperscript{106}

Considering Mevs’s belief that Dominicans were in need of greater moral guidance than Haitians, the young missionary must have felt overjoyed to receive two important visitors from the United States the year after he began working in Santo Domingo. For years AME leaders in the United States had promised to send a bishop to survey the work in Hispaniola. In May 1887, the much-awaited guest, Bishop Campbell, finally arrived. The PHFMS Secretary, Dr. Townsend, accompanied the elderly Campbell, who was highly esteemed for his twenty-three years of service as a bishop and fifty years as a minister in the AME Church. Undoubtedly, Mevs expected Campbell to apply his experience and wisdom to help guide the AME congregations in Santo Domingo and Haiti. Mevs was not disappointed. After Campbell and Townsend met with the various government officials and rested in the home of their host, Mrs. Astwood, the elderly bishop led an ordination service for Mevs and other local preachers on May 29, 1887.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{107} Astwood was absent since he was on sabbatical in the United States during this period.
The service was similar to the one that Astwood had experienced in New York only a few years prior. Yet, this time the young men standing before the orator were not American diplomats, but a mixed group of poor, Afro-Caribbean men with ethnic ties to Haiti, the United States, and the British and Danish Caribbean. Besides Rev. Mevs—upon whom Campbell bestowed the rites of elder—the other honored men had years of experience in the local Dominican church, although they had not benefitted from the same educational opportunities as Mevs. These were men who had aided Mevs for the past year as Astwood’s duties had kept him away. For example, Francois Cladio, an American-Haitian who had migrated from Haiti with his mother in 1837, preached and taught in Spanish in the church. Campbell ordained Cladio a deacon, marking his rank above the other three men—Adam Rodgers, Charles H. Williams, and Simon Halls—who were all appointed local preachers.108

The ordination of these Afro-Caribbean men enabled local leaders to sustain the denomination’s work in the capital. It also helped to create a hierarchical missionary network that spread as local leaders moved across the island. While Astwood remained the superintendent of the Dominican mission, Mevs was the named pastor over the church. In Mevs’s absence, Cladio could also take charge of the congregation. Moreover, the three local preachers could lead the group as well as begin missions in new places.

108 It is likely that Adam Rodgers and Simon Halls were both descendants of black immigrants from the U.S. Charles H. Williams, however, was most likely from the Danish West Indian island of St. Thomas.
Rodgers and Williams soon initiated congregations in Barahona and San Pedro de Macorís respectively. It is likely that these local AME leaders were not fully aware of the AME Church’s doctrine since they had not been trained in the United States, yet their ordination enabled the church to develop despite limited investment from abroad.

3.5 Conclusion

The stories of Astwood, Dorce, Mevs, Stewart; their assistants Cladio, Hall, Williams, Rodgers, Shepard and Martin; and other unnamed AME preachers and local leaders provide incomplete pictures of how black Protestants experienced and enacted missionary work in the Caribbean. As subaltern leaders within the African Methodist denomination and within the global racial system more broadly, these Afro-Caribbean men and their histories were not often featured in church newspapers or eulogized in church encyclopedias. Indeed, prior to the ordination ceremony, Mevs wrote melancholically, “I doubt whether [the AME Church has] much of any idea concerning the place and the great difficulties under which missionaries have to labor.”109 Few people in the United States understood the degree to which Afro-Caribbean ministers operated independently from the AME Church. The records that remain of these men’s lives provide only glimpses of the hardships that they faced.

At the individual level, the unstable nature of missionary work took its toll on missionaries. The Mossells left Haiti in 1885 because of sickness, and Mevs ultimately followed suit. In March 1888, Mevs traveled to the United States in order to seek a position elsewhere.\textsuperscript{110} In April 1889, he was appointed to the Bermuda conference, but by November 1891, he returned to the United States to work in Arkadelphia, Arkansas.\textsuperscript{111} Finally, settled in the U.S. South, it seems that Mevs and his family never returned to the islands.\textsuperscript{112} Astwood also returned to the United States after being dismissed from his diplomatic post in 1889.\textsuperscript{113} In subsequent years, other Caribbean missionaries followed a similar path, leaving the islands to become ministers in America; one of them, John Hurst of Haiti, even became a bishop in the AME Church.\textsuperscript{114}

Still, documents of the era also suggest a ferocious perseverance, ingenuity, and cooperation among these Afro-Caribbean ministers, local preachers, and their parishioners. Without direct oversight and without money to support their salaries and church growth, AME missionaries in the Caribbean relied on a small group of local leaders who preached on behalf of the AME denomination. They depended on their

\textsuperscript{112} In 1894, Mevs was stationed in Greenville, Mississippi. “Personals,” \textit{Christian Recorder}, April 26, 1894.
\textsuperscript{113} Astwood resided in Santo Domingo until the spring of 1889, although he continued to be paid as the Santo Domingo superintendent through 1893.
\textsuperscript{114} Hurst trained at Wilberforce along with two other young men from Haiti whose last names were Guiot and Day. “Missionary Report of Rev. C.W. Mossell, A.M., Port-au-Prince, Haiti,” \textit{Christian Recorder}, January 8, 1885.
parishioners’ abilities to garner donations from local patrons in government and business. They counted on their friendships with white missionaries and philanthropists. And, ultimately they trusted in their God to see them through. For Afro-Caribbean missionaries and their parishioners, building networks of survival—networks of patronage and moral support (often built with unlikely parties)—was an essential method to maintaining independent black churches in the Caribbean. It is a method that Caribbean AME Churches still practice to this day.
4. A Case for Dominican Protestantism: Historical Narrative, Property Law, and Contested Nationality in Goodin vs. Astwood

On Wednesday May 28, 1890, the faithful Protestants of Santo Domingo City were gathered in the old military barracks, the Cuartel de las Milicias, for their evening service when the doors of the church burst open and the former United States Consul barred the doorway. Fired over a year ago for attempting to lease Christopher Columbus’s bones, ex-consul Henry Charles Clifford Astwood proceeded to call the parishioners and minister, Rev. Charles E. Goodin, dissenters and rebels against the African Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States. The attendees sat in shock as a few passersby peered into the open entrance to see the zealous Mr. Astwood publically ex-communicate the so-called rebels and demand the keys to the building. It was a true scandal without precedent in Santo Domingo!

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1 This scene is described in three places. First, in the June 7th, 1890 summons to the alcaldía, Astwood is accused of “interrupting the services being celebrated and insulting the [officiate] and other charges that will be brought in audience.” Expedientes de causas civiles, Santo Domingo 1887-1920, DO AGN Alcaldías. 2.6.L152, Leg. 304099, folder 1890, doc. 7-8. Second, the prosecution’s legal arguments state that, “one night when the [Dominicans] least expected it, when they were in their religious services, Mr. Astwood who says he is the superintendent named by that church or Board of Missions, tried to impede them from the religious ceremony in which he branded them dissidents and thus rebels and demanded the keys [to the church building].” Demanda por apelación de sentencia, DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.34-33, Leg. 34, Exp. 33, Year 1890. Third, the defense’s legal arguments state, “My representative, Mr. Astwood, immediately made the necessary arrangements so that the new Sect would no longer profane the temple...he publically excommunicated the two principle authors of that apostasy, Mr. Goodin and Mr. Gross.” Ibid.
Unexamined by historians and forgotten by time, Astwood’s outburst in the Cuartel de las Milicias marked the beginning of a legal dispute that passed before all three branches of Dominican government before the Dominican Supreme Court resolved the lawsuit on July 7th, 1892. This chapter recounts the first stage of that dispute, Goodin vs. Astwood, and how a seemingly insignificant group of Protestants residing in the Dominican Republic used historical narrative, liberal ideology, and property law to claim Dominican nationality while struggling for recognition within the government’s political apparatus.

During the first phase of the lawsuit, both sides relied on the telling and retelling of a single story: the history of African American immigration to Hispaniola. The two narratives that resulted tied the immigration history to two distinct ecclesiastical bodies. On the one hand, Astwood represented the AME Church, an American black church with increasing global outreach. On the other hand, Goodin and his associates represented the Protestant Congregation of Santo Domingo, a national church formed in the Dominican Republic. Ultimately, the legal arguments on both sides signified two competing discourses on the place of black American immigrants in the Dominican Republic. They also revealed diverging theories about property law in an ostensibly liberal society under dictatorship and evermore under the imperialistic influence of the United States. This first phase of the lawsuit Goodin vs. Astwood thus demonstrates how a mixed group of people traditionally construed as outsiders wrote themselves into the
history of the Dominican nation. Consequently, they undermined commonly held beliefs about Dominican society and challenged emerging threats to Dominican sovereignty.

4.1 Escalating to the First Instance Court

By October 1889, former U.S. Consul to the Dominican Republic and the Presiding Elder of the Santo Domingo AME Church, H.C.C. Astwood, had finally settled into life in New York—the hustle, the politicking, and the incessant gossip regarding his dismissal from the position he had held for the last seven years. As U.S. Consul, Astwood was revered by the American public as, “one of the most prominent colored men in the country.” Yet, now he likely felt sore after disputing against the new U.S. President, Benjamin Harrison, to regain his foreign post and good name. The shame of losing his government appointment, and the anger he felt at his cadre of accusers, including the formidable Frederick Douglass and his son Charles R. Douglass, did not settle well with him.

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3 News about Astwood’s dismissal, which took place in December 1888, and the Columbus bones scandal appeared first in U.S. newspapers in January 1889. See “How’s This for Gall,” Pittsburgh Dispatch, January 3, 1889.

4 This description of Astwood is recorded in a 1901 article, “Negro Pastor Convicted,” New York Times, May 24, 1901.

5 According to the Washington Bee, Astwood sought to be reinstated as the Consul of Santo Domingo, but Frederick and Charles Douglass accused him of having two wives. The charges were brought before the President, who did not reappoint Astwood. The paper stated that, “Mr. Astwood is very sore and declares that he proposes to make war on the President.” “Astwood Defeated,” Washington Bee, October 12, 1889.
Picking up a correspondence from Santo Domingo, Astwood desperately needed to read some good news. Scanning the letter, he conjectured that brighter days remained in the distant future. It appeared that after eight months in the Dominican Republic the preacher Charles E. Goodin from Jamaica was not faring well in the capital. Astwood likely felt exasperated as he finished reading Goodin’s request for a salary and began to compose his response. After expressing sincere regret for Goodin’s deplorable situation, Astwood informed Goodin that he was trying to make arrangements with Rev. W.B. Derrick, the missionary department (PHFMS) secretary, with the request. As the Presiding Elder of the AME Church in the Dominican capital, Astwood knew that the congregation currently paid pittances to both Goodin and the local deacon, Francois Claidio, who alternated Sunday preaching responsibilities with Goodin. The minuscule income of the church could not support the two preachers, and it was reasonable for Goodin to expect help from the Missionary Board. Astwood only hoped that Rev. Derrick would have enough money to add Goodin to the payroll and that Goodin would patiently await his response.  

Astwood returned to Santo Domingo in early May 1890. To his chagrin, he was met with disturbing news. The matter was truly outrageous! He knew that Goodin was

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6 This description is an interpretation of claims that Astwood’s lawyer made in his defense. *Demanda por apelación de sentencia*, DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.34-33, Leg. 34, Exp. 33, Year 1890.

7 According to newspapers, Astwood left the United States on April 30, 1890. He planned to return to the U.S. in September in order to begin a national newspaper. “Will Not Be Seated: The Fifty-First Congress Will Contain But One Afro-American,” *Plaindealer* (Detroit, Michigan), May 9, 1890. In April 1890, Astwood also
not satisfied in his position, but he never imagined that the preacher would engage in an act of open rebellion by attempting to unite the Dominican AME congregation with the British Wesleyan Church in St. Thomas.\textsuperscript{8} Considering the fact that in recent years a number of migrants from other islands in the West Indies had joined ranks with the immigrants in Santo Domingo, Astwood most feared that the newcomers had persuaded some of the less faithful African Americans to leave the religion of their forefathers.\textsuperscript{9} This had been the pattern in Puerto Plata and Samaná, where the British Wesleyans dominated the missionary field, and if the majority of the members decided to leave the AME Church, he would not be able to stop them. Still, if Astwood had his say, the AME Church in Santo Domingo would not be so easily conquered. Quickly devising a course of action, he set out to identify the remaining loyal members.

It is uncertain who exactly aligned with Astwood since a roster of the faithful African Methodists no longer exists.\textsuperscript{10} Yet, he later claimed to lead forty-three

\textsuperscript{8} This explanation is found in Astwood’s defense before the primera instancia dated October 27, 1890. \textit{Demanda por apelación de sentencia}, DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.34-33, Leg. 34, Exp. 33, Year 1890.

\textsuperscript{9} This explanation is given by the Minister of Public Works and the former Dominican President, Alejandro Woss y Gil in a letter to the National Congress dated March 20, 1891. \textit{Oficios y correspondencia} 1890-1891, DO AGN Poder Legislativo. 1.9.LC819, Leg. 207723.

\textsuperscript{10} Along with a letter to Woss y Gil dated January 9, 1890, Astwood submitted a document written by the forty-three people who he represented. I could not find this document in the \textit{Obras Publicas} records at the national archive. \textit{Correspondencia y oficios enviados y recibidos}, 1890 a 1901, DO AGN Obras Públicas 1.4.L7, Leg. 1101070.
Protestants, which, as he insisted, represented the majority of the formerly unified congregation.\textsuperscript{11} These forty-three members consisted mostly of African American immigrants and their descendants, and according to Astwood these same immigrants along with deacon Francois Claidio informed him of the new developments in the local church the very same day he returned to Santo Domingo.\textsuperscript{12} It took about a month, however, for Astwood to settle his affairs at the U.S. Consulate and act on the news of the small rebellion taking place in the Santo Domingo AME Church. On Wednesday night, May 28, 1890, Astwood made his move. Walking to the building in the Cuartel de las Milicias—the very same building he had helped to construct with his own money—he was overcome by rage. From outside, Astwood could probably hear the sound of the organ as the parishioners sang, which likely fueled his anger. As the highest-ranking member of the AME Church in Santo Domingo, Astwood knew what he had to do. Barging into the service, he called out to Goodin, “Dissident! Rebel!” Noticing another familiar face, that of the young Alejandro Gross, Astwood excommunicated them both in the name of AME Church. The property was his right, not theirs, for these rebels had proven themselves to be nothing more than selfish apostates, enemies of the AME Church and its holy mission.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{12} Demanda por apelación de sentencia, DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.34-33, Leg. 34, Exp. 33, Year 1890.
\textsuperscript{13} This paraphrased description of the rebels can be found in Astwood’s defense. Ibid.
Astwood, however, was not as successful in his mission. He never regained the keys to the building, and on Saturday, June 7th, a few days after his outlandish performance in the church, the sheriff of the alcaldía, Señor Pablo Bernie, walked the few blocks from his office to Astwood’s residence and knocked at the door. Speaking with Astwood personally, he read the summons from the “Protestant Association named West Indian” that obligated Astwood to attend a hearing before the alcaldía of Santo Domingo. The hearing would take place on Monday, June 9th in the courtroom of the old National Palace on Colón Street. The irony was laughable. Would Christopher Columbus—this time in the specter of a street name—again signify Astwood’s doom?

Pablo Bernie informed him that he was to appear before the mayor at nine o’clock in the morning. At that moment, Astwood would hear the charges brought against him for interrupting the church service and insulting Pastor Goodin in front of the congregation. Leaving a copy of the summons with Astwood, the sheriff headed back to his office, and Astwood shut the door behind him.14

Astwood was likely frustrated with the course of events. When he first arrived in Santo Domingo in 1882, “there was not a vestige of a Protestant institution.”15 Yet, with his help, the congregation had grown to over fifty members, with nearly one hundred

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14 Expedientes de causas civiles, Santo Domingo 1887-1920, DO AGN Alcaldías. 2.6.L.152, Leg. 304099, folder 1890, doc. 7-8.
people attending the Sunday School services.\textsuperscript{16} Within a few short years, his work had resulted in the construction of a “neat little building” in the \textit{Cuartel de las Milicias} in 1884.\textsuperscript{17} Was he now to be ousted from his own church with so little regard? Was all the work committed in the name of the AME denomination to be handed over to the white British Wesleyans? And, was his dream of a Protestant movement in this Catholic country to die in its infancy? If Astwood had his way, the dispute would resolve itself quickly in favor of the AME Church, and would thus save the Protestants in the city and the AME denomination further embarrassment. Otherwise, a lawsuit between two Protestant sects in this Catholic country would surely undermine everything for which he had worked over the past seven years.

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The board members of the Protestant congregation—Charles Goodin, Alejandro Gross, Ricardo Grofs, José and Danice Fonten, Jorge Fantal, Charles Stuppard, Francisco Roberts, and Fermin Hamilton—met solemnly in the chapel of the \textit{Cuartel de las Milicias}.\textsuperscript{18} All had not gone according to plan. On June 10\textsuperscript{th}, the day after the hearing in which they brought complaint against Astwood, Astwood sent a notice that summoned Goodin and the others to court. In the summons, Astwood demanded that they abandon

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\textsuperscript{18} There is no record of this meeting, but it is likely to have taken place since the board of the church would have decided the next course of action. The name of the board members can be found in \textit{Sesión del 12 de Junio, 1891}, DO AGN Poder Legislativo. 1.9.LC819. Oficios y correspondencia, 1890-1891. Leg. 207723.
the building and cede its possession to the AME Church.19 Two days later, on June 12th, Astwood and Goodin met once again before the alcaldía, Magistrate José M. Zabea, to argue their respective sides. It was at this meeting that things took a turn for the worse. Goodin and his friends hired a lawyer, Emilio C. Joubert, to argue their defense, but during the arguments Astwood gained the advantage. Magistrate Zabea swiftly settled the matter two days later on June 14th with a ruling in favor of Astwood. In the ruling, Zabea called Goodin’s group a “new sect,” and order them to hand over the church property to the AME Church. They were additionally fined for the costs of the trial.20

Gathering to discuss what could be done in the face of this sentence, the board of the church bleakly realized that a resolution with Astwood would not come easily. Their gripe against the AME Church had begun two years ago. Ever since Rev. A.H. and Ellabee Mevs had left Santo Domingo for the United States in 1888 and had never returned, the congregation had suffered for the lack of leadership.21 Astwood could not fulfill the duties of pastoring over one hundred people on his own. He was at times away on long trips to the United States, and he was too busy with diplomatic work when he was present in the city. The remaining church leaders were not available

19 The June 10th, 1890 summons can be found in the records of the lawsuit brought before the primera instancia, Demanda por apelación de sentencia, DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.34-33, Leg. 34, Exp. 33, Year 1890.
20 A copy of this ruling is stored among the primera instancia documents. Ibid.
21 By March 1888, Mevs was in Indiana and had plans to remain in the United States. “Personal,” Christian Recorder, March 8, 1888. He most likely attended the AME General Conference of 1888. He was later assigned to Bermuda, for which he left a year later in April 1889. “Rev. A.H. Mevs and Family Sail for Bermuda This Week,” Christian Recorder, April 11, 1889. See also, the conclusion of the third chapter of this dissertation.
for other reasons. The elderly Gross had recently passed away, leaving his son, Alejandro, to carry on his legacy. Deacon Cladio remained, but was only able to preach part-time and was not ordained to do the work of a full pastor. The two other preachers who would have been able to help Cladio, Adam Rodgers and Charles H. Williams, were stationed miles away from the capital. Rodgers was preaching to sugarcane migrant workers in Barahona. Similarly, Williams had moved to San Pedro de Macorís, where he led a small Anglophone congregation. By the end of the year, it was clear that the AME Church in Santo Domingo needed additional help. The PHFMS, however, had continued its pattern of neglect, and had not sent additional missionaries.

It was not until December of 1888 that Bishop Tanner recommended Charles E. Goodin for the job. Goodin, who was originally from the Turks Islands, was in many ways like the other Afro-Caribbean Protestant leaders in Santo Domingo. Like Astwood, Goodin had once been an active member of the Wesleyan Church before migrating to the United States and joining the AME Church. Goodin, however, had only spent a short time in the United States and was new to African Methodism. When he arrived in

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22 I have yet to find the exact date of Gross’s death, but he is referenced only in the past tense during the trial.
24 “Bro. C.E. Goodin, of Turks Island,” Christian Recorder, March 21, 1998. See also, Astwood’s defense in Demanda por apelación de sentencia, DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.34-33, Leg. 34, Exp. 33, Year 1890.
25 Demanda por apelación de sentencia, DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.34-33, Leg. 34, Exp. 33, Year 1890.
Santo Domingo early in 1889, he joined the island’s other unordained AME preachers. Lacking the credentials that would have qualified him to take Mevs’s place, Goodin was not exactly the type of missionary for whom the congregation had hoped.

Goodin’s arrival in Santo Domingo also posed a financial issue. He was not on the Missionary Board’s payroll, and because of the laws of the church, bishop Tanner could not arrange a salary for him. This left the congregation with the burden of compensation. According to Astwood, the congregation arranged to pay Goodin with the offerings from the first and third Sundays of each month. This arrangement seemed to satisfy everyone, but then Astwood returned to the United States, leaving Goodin and Cladio in charge. In his absence, Goodin was to continue receiving the offering as arranged and the congregation was to pay Cladio the offering of the second Sunday. These donations, however, were not enough to support Goodin, and added additional financial pressure upon the parishioners who were now left with only the fourth Sunday earnings to cover their monthly expenses.26

The financial issues created a schism within the congregation, which began to question its relationship with the United States. Had not the congregation gone out of its way to pay yearly dues to the missionary department (PHFMS)? Yet, they had received so little in return. The dues themselves totaled over half of what Mevs received annually

26 Ibid.
from the PHFMS. If the department refused to send a qualified missionary, why not now divert these funds to Goodin and Cladio? What good was the affiliation with the AME Church in the United States if it brought financial burden with none of the benefits?

These questions must have intensified as news that the AME connection was severed in Haiti, British Guiana (Demerara), and St. Thomas spread among the parishioners in Santo Domingo. It was said that Protestants in these places were leaving the AME denomination because of the PHFMS’s inability to fund their churches. In Haiti, for example, the AME parishioners wrote to the PHFMS with a list of grievances in November of 1889. “We love the AME Church,” they resolved, “but have now reached the impossible on this line. Not one of our teachers, nor our missionaries have received a dollar from our Missionary Board.”27 Now, in the fall of 1889 the Haitian congregation was threatening to withdraw from the denomination.28 The AME Church in Demerara was in a similar state. In March of 1888, a pair of traveling ministers, C.H. Sheen and S.H. Jewett, along with the local Guianese preacher Mr. Martin organized the first Annual Conference of the AME Church in Demerara. Two months later, Sheen and Martin attended the General Conference of 1888 in Indianapolis, Indiana and subsequently took up work in the United States. With the Guiana mission short of

missionary leaders, the Missionary Board named Mr. and Mrs. Buckner to replace the two men, but “when the time arrived not a fourth of the money could be raised,” to send the couple to South America. Bishop Tanner explained in the *Christian Recorder* that, “with the treasury empty and confusion reigning as to the secretaryship of the same,” the Missionary Board “called a halt” to the work in Guiana.29 These cases alone were enough to stir up doubt in the minds of the Santo Domingo parishioners.

The case of St. Thomas, however, most likely had the greatest impact. Not only did the preacher Rev. C.H. Williams (who was stationed in San Pedro de Macorís) maintain ties to St. Thomas and the minister who was in charge of the AME congregation there, Rev. Herbert F. Miller, but the economic connection between the small Danish island and the Dominican Republic could not be ignored. Each year more people from St. Thomas and other neighboring islands were migrating to the Dominican south, and many of them had joined the AME Church in Santo Domingo, San Pedro de Macoris, and Barahona. News from St. Thomas was thus of primary interest, but the reports on the state of AME Church in 1889 were not good. It was said that members of the St. Thomas AME Church had withdrawn entirely from the denomination and had handed over the church property to the British Wesleyans. “Bishop it is this or nothing,” the congregation had written in a communication to Bishop Tanner. The letter explained

29 Ibid.
that the congregation owed a debt of $3000 on the church building. “We are unable to pay…and you are not able to pay it for us,” it stated.\(^{30}\) Having written multiple letters to the Missionary Board asking for help, the now former pastor of the AME Church in St. Thomas, Rev. Miller, was without hope.\(^{31}\) “The AME Church cares nothing about St. Thomas,” he was rumored to have said.\(^{32}\) Could not the same be said of Santo Domingo, Haiti, and Demerara?

For those living in the Dominican capital, it seemed as if their congregation faced the same problem as AME members in the other islands of the Caribbean. One needed only to consider the lack of money and attention the AME Church in the United States had given to the Santo Domingo mission over the last few years. Moreover, the AME Church apparently had no missionary method towards the Caribbean.\(^{33}\) Unlike Africa, where the PHFMS was beginning to focus its resources, in the Caribbean the PHFMS had relied on the money, work, and dedication of the local people without offering more than elusive moral support. Now, with Elijah Gross deceased and Mevs gone with no sign that he would return, it was up to those who were left—Cladio, Goodin and Gross’s son, Alejandro—to decide what to do.

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\(^{30}\) Ibid.

\(^{31}\) The AME missionary, Rev. Herbert F. Miller, had traveled to Denmark in 1888 to “induce the government to recognize us and allow our pastors to baptize and marry,” but the mission failed. He subsequently left the AME Church. Ibid.

\(^{32}\) This description is found a year later in a letter by J.A.M. Johns printed in the Christian Recorder. “To All Who Believe in Saving and Sustaining Work Already Begun,” Christian Recorder, August 27, 1891.

\(^{33}\) Tanner made this criticism in, “West Indies and South America,” Christian Recorder, November 20, 1889.
The congregation’s leaders, however, were divided. Cladio remained faithful to the AME Church, but Gross sided with Goodin and planned to lead the congregation away from African Methodism. It is likely that the pair intended to hand over the AME congregation and property to the Wesleyans as Astwood accused.34

For loyal African Methodists like Cladio the potential association with the Wesleyans was unfathomable. It not only signaled a break from the AME Church’s dysfunctional Missionary Board, but also a suspension of the meaningful, albeit limited, symbolic ties that elderly black Americans in Santo Domingo held to their place of origin. The AME Church was not like any other institution. It was a black organization that had led the emigration to Haiti and was now unifying the race across the world in spite of great odds. It signified the determination and triumph of the Negro in the United States, and the perseverance of those emigrants who had spent decades among the “superstitious” people of Catholic Haiti35. The AME Church was thus a space in which many within the black American community in Santo Domingo could imagine, claim, and enact, the concept of “home” without qualification.

34 Although there is no mention of this plot by Goodin or his associates during the lawsuit, Goodin reestablished ties to the Wesleyan church in 1892, and remained its lead contact in the Dominican southeast through the 1910s. See Wesleyan missionary Emerson Mears’ version of the history. Emerson Mears to Mutton Brown, Dominican Republic, 16 March 1907. Methodist Missionary Society Archives. Microfiche 2064. Goodin was also associated with and funded by the Christian & Missionary Alliance. See “A New Missionary for Hayti,” Christian Alliance and Foreign Missionary Weekly 8, no. 15 (October 1894): 353.
35 At the time, it was common for Protestants to characterize Catholics as superstitious.
Yet, for those who wished to leave the denomination, home was another place altogether. Coming to terms with the alcalde’s June 14th ruling, Goodin, Gross, and the rest of the dissenting board members decided that their only recourse was to appeal to the first instance court (*primera instancia*).36 This time, however, they would use a new tactic. When the sheriff delivered the summons to Astwood on July 4, 1890, Goodin claimed to be, “the pastor of the Protestant Church and the President of the Congregation of Protestants of Santo Domingo.”37 The congregation was not a new religious sect as the alcalde had claimed, or the “Association called West Indian” as they had originally named themselves, but a church that had existed since the first black North American immigrants had settled in the city. This was a simple matter of historical fact, and it proved that Santo Domingo, not the United States, was their country and home.

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36 The antecedent of the *primera instancia* court formed during the era of Haitian rule. After Dominican independence in 1845, the higher courts of justice were formed, and in 1854 they came to be known as the *primera instancia* (First Resort) Courts. In this same year, the appellate courts were eliminated, and their functions were given to the Supreme Court. Thus, during 1890-1892, there were three levels of the judicial system: the *alcaldías*, the *tribunales de primera instancia*, and the *suprema corte de justicia*. The *primera instancia* courts were responsible for lawsuits that the *alcaldías* did not handle, and they also ruled on appeals of decisions made by the *alcaldes*. Appeals at the *primera instancia* level went directly to the Supreme Court. Guía de los fondos el archivo general de la nación (Santo Domingo: Archivo General de la Nación, 2012), 83, 89.

37 This summons can be found among the *primera instancia* court records. Demanda por apelación de sentencia, DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.34-33, Leg. 34, Exp. 33, Year 1890.
4.2 The “Hechos”: Historical Narrative in Goodin vs. Astwood38

“The sun has set in the east!” exclaimed lawyers Emilio C. Joubert and Lucas T. Gibbes in their twenty-nine-page appeal to the First Instance Court on behalf of their clients, Rev. Charles E. Goodin and his congregation.39 It was common knowledge that the Protestants of Santo Domingo were a sect, “whose history was tied in great part to the history of the country,” but somehow the parishioners now found themselves before the Dominican court arguing for their rights as Dominican nationals. From the perspective of Joubert and his partner, Lucas E. Gibbes—both of whom had received their education in the city’s Normal School founded by Eugenio María de Hostos—the whole matter was preposterous.40 The liberal laws of the nation could not deny the Protestants’ nationality, nor could the American citizen, Astwood, claim ownership of a building that in actuality belonged to the Dominican state. The Dominican government had granted the building in the Cartel de las Milicias to the Dominican Protestants for

38 Prior to this appeal, the lawsuit between Goodin and Astwood did not produce a large paper trail. It may be that the records of this case have been lost. On the other hand, the alcaldía’s ruling states that both sides presented their conclusions verbally, and it is thus likely that written documents were never produced. The elevation of the case to the primera instancia court, however, required each party to write testimonies of the events and legal arguments to prove the rightful ownership of the church property. Both Goodin and Astwood hired lawyers to complete this work.

39 Unless otherwise noted, the citations in this section come from the twenty-nine page prosecution, which can be found in the First Instance court records. DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.34-33, Leg. 34, Exp. 33, Year 1890.

40 Lucas T. Gibbes and Emilio C. Joubert studied at the Normal School founded by Eugenio María de Hostos. Gibbes was among the first graduates and Joubert was known as part of the generación del 99. Luis F. Mejía, De Lilís a Trujillo, 4th ed. (Santo Domingo: Banreservas-Bibliófilos, 2011) 59, 399. Joubert later went on to become the Dominican ambassador to the United States in 1900. Both Joubert and Gibbes were also grand masters of the Masonic lodge in Santo Domingo. “Grandes maestros de la gran logia de la República Dominicana,” Gran logia de la República Dominicana, accessed January 22, 2016, http://sitio.granlogiard.org/grandes-maestros-de-la-gran-logia-de-la-republica-dominicana-inc/.
their special use, and thus the Dominicans were the rightful beneficiaries of the government-owned property in the Cuartel de las Milicias. History would prove their case.

Joubert and Gibbes’s description of the facts began with the “painful intrusion of the Haitians,” the so-called “Era of Haitian domination.” In that time, Haitian president, Jean Pierre Boyer, recognized that the many wars on the island had decimated the land and its population. “Desirous to strengthen [his] race on this part of the Island,” he instigated an immigration of people from his “same race in North America.”41 Boyer sent his agent Mr. Granville to the United States to recruit, “American immigrants of the black race,” who sought freedom and benefits in Haiti.42 Eight thousand immigrants arrived between 1822 and 1824.43 The ones who stayed and were not decimated by disease became Haitian nationals, “and afterwards the government of the Republic offered them public positions and recognized them as Dominicans.” These were the people whose religion was popularly known as “the sect of the Americans.”

41 It was common to blame the immigration on Boyer. In 1893 historian, José G. García, wrote that Boyer “took as a pretext humanitarian feelings...in order to promote the immigration to the Republic of some people of color so that they would contribute to changing the social phenotype [fisonomia] and awaken racial concern that would identify their interests with those of the French part.” José Gabriel García, Compendio de la historia de Santo Domingo, 3rd ed., vol. 2 (Santo Domingo: Imprenta de García Hermanos, 1894), 121. García was also one among many of the references that the prosecution presented to the tribunal. 42 For information on Granville, his letters to Boyer, and newspaper articles regarding the immigration, see Jonathas Henri Théodore Granville, Biographie de Jonathas Granville par son fils (Paris: Imprimerie de E. Briere, 1873) 77-244. 43 Estimates of how many people left the United States for Haiti range between 6000-13,000. H. Hoetink, The Dominican People, 1850-1900: Notes for a Historical Sociology (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 20.
Over time, the immigrants proved themselves to be productive members of society. The Haitian government gave them positions in the military, marines and civil society. Then during the First Republic, the Junta Central of the Dominican government conceded to them the same rights that the Haitians had offered. It “also considered them competent for the exercise of military and civilian posts.” Joubert and Gibbes highlighted the work of Elijah R. Gross, “the principal branch of the Dominican Protestant family,” who held a high position in the Dominican judiciary. Gross represented the very point that Gibbes and Joubert wished to emphasize: the “regrettable failure” of the Dominican ancestors—the success of Haitian dominance—had led to an immigration that engendered the existing Protestant population, which consisted of socially responsible, prominent, and reputable Dominican nationals.

Forming part of the “geographical and political constituency” of the Republic, the Dominican Protestants were granted the right to religious freedom. This political liberty contrasted starkly with the intolerance of the Spanish during the annexation period. According to Joubert and Gibbes, the Dominican government “tolerated [the Protestants’] religious services or, better said, they protected them,” for the government

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44 During the Haitian government, Gross served as a colonel in the army and then as postmaster general for three years. Later in 1853, under the Dominican Republic’s first president, Pedro Santana, he was elected a judge: he held this position for at least nineteen years. Gross’s evolution in government earned him friends among influential political leaders, including president José María Cabral (1866–1868) and the Catholic priesthood, who Gross argued with on behalf of annexation circa 1871. The Commission of Inquiry, “Report of the Commission of Inquiry to Santo Domingo” (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1871), 254. See also Hoetink, Dominican People, 21.
“granted them the use of buildings of national domain for their religious services.”

These buildings consisted first of the San Francisco convent, from which they ultimately had to move because the “canvases of the ancient walls were falling down.” The Administration then granted them the old chapel La Soledad, which bordered the Catholic Church Las Mercedes. The Protestants remained there prior to annexation, and the Catholic priests, “were happy to teach Roman Christianity two steps away from one of the sects that derived from Lutheran Protestantism.” Yet, in 1861, when the nation was brought once again under the “handcuffs and chains” of Spain, the Protestants, “were cast out from La Soledad by the clamor of an intolerant clergy that Spain brought among her lucid and martial battalions as a complement to her domination.” Only because of Mr. Gross’s insistence did the Spanish governor permit the Protestants to worship in a building located in the old militia barracks, the place known as the Cuartel de las Milicias. But Spain later confiscated this building too for the use of their troops during the War of Restoration. It was only under Dominican rule that the Protestants enjoyed true religious freedom. After the Dominican government was restored in 1865, the National Congress not only voted to concede the building in the Cuartel de las

45 Gross’s involvement in gaining rights for the Protestants was well remembered. In 1862, he also convinced the government to permit Protestant burial in the first Catholic cemetery in Ciudad Nueva. This act gained the American immigrants important burial rights, although they were segregated to a specific sector of the cemetery. Amparo Chantada, “El Cemeterio de ciudad nueva: Un auténtico santuario de la nacionalidad dominicana,” Santo Domingo, accessed July 14, 2015, http://www.cielonaranja.com/chantadacementerio.htm#ftn1.
Milicias to the Protestants, but distinguished members of Congress, including Pedro Valverde y Lara and the Catholic priest—and current archbishop in 1890—Father Fernando Arturo de Meriño, supported the concession.\(^4\) According to Joubert and Gibbes, the government additionally helped to reconstruct the building. The stark contrast between Spain and the Dominican Republic thus emphasized Dominican liberal values and showed that religious freedom was part of Dominican nationalist ideology.

It was imperative that Joubert and Gibbes make this rhetorical move, stressing the relationship between religious freedom and Dominican nationalism, for in many ways their claim about religious freedom was more of a liberal ideal than a reality. Since the founding of the Dominican nation—when the government declared Catholicism the national religion—Protestants living in the Dominican Republic had to constantly negotiated changing political regimes and fluctuating attitudes towards their religious practices. At best, the Dominican constitution guaranteed them religious freedom and Dominican society generally ignored them, as took place during the First Republic (1844-1861). At worst, their legal rights were stripped, their churches were confiscated, and they were forced to worship in private, as happened during Spanish Annexation

\(^4\) Pedro Valverde y Lara was a Dominican nationalist, politician and representative at the National Congress. He fought for restoration during the war against Spain (1861-1865) and died in 1871. Father Fernando Arturo de Meriño, was a Dominican Catholic priest and nationalist, who went into exile during Spanish annexation. He returned after the War of Restoration and was later elected President (1880-1882). He served for one term, and was succeeded by Heureaux. Meriño became Archbishop of Santo Domingo in 1885.
The relationship between Protestants and the Dominican government was thus an unstable one that was dictated by the government’s close relationship with the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{47}

Joubert and Gibbes’s version of events regarding the Dominican Protestants reflected the liberal ideals of the separation between Church and State, and ignored signs that the Catholic government was less tolerant than they purported it to be. Their claim that the property granted by the Dominican Congress was sanctioned by the National Congress put a positive spin on the fact that the government did not reinstate the Protestants in the property La Soledad, the building they had worshiped in prior to the War of Restoration. In a similar vein, this declaration cast in positive light a condition placed on the Dominican Protestants: “As soon as [the building in the Cuartel de las Milicias] was destined for another use [the congregation] would remain ipso facto without effect of the conceded privilege.” The Dominican government—not the Protestant congregation—retained the rights to the property. These two factors suggest that the status of the Dominican Protestants’ right to public worship may have been more precarious than Joubert and Gibbes implied.

\textsuperscript{47} Luis Martínez-Fernández argues that, “while the political leadership (mainly caudillos Pedro Santana and buenaventura Báez) flip-flopped in their political stances according to which way the geopolitical winds were blowing, the Catholic Church remained a bastion of Dominican nationality, which it sought to define on the bases of religious purity, anti-Haitianism, and Europhilia.” See “The Sword and the Crucifix: Church-State Relations and Nationality in the Nineteenth-Century Dominican Republic,” \textit{Latin American Research Review} 30, no. 1 (1995): 69–93.
Nevertheless, discussing the Dominican Protestants and the government’s property in nationalistic terms was strategic. In doing so, Joubert and Gibbes developed a dichotomy between the nationalist Dominican Protestants and the imperialist American, Mr. Astwood. They explained that after regaining the building in the Cuartel de las Milicias, the Protestants worshiped there until the “ruined state of the place impeded them.” The congregation’s “enthusiasm languished” during a period of many civil wars and the succession of caudillos that attempted to gain power over the government, but they rallied donations from Dominicans of all religious backgrounds—both Catholics and Protestants—for the rehabilitation of the building.48 The Dominicans had initiated the reconstruction, but the donations were not enough to keep up the work and by 1882 the project was paralyzed. It was at this point that Astwood arrived as, “a business agent of the North Metropolis and local preacher of the African Church of New York.” Joubert and Gibbes explained that Astwood, a “Methodist fanatic” and so-called “preacher of good doctrines,” took advantage of the poor health of Elijah Gross and the weakened state of the congregation. He appeared to be helping the Protestant church of Santo Domingo, and Gross put him in charge of the pastoral duties and the rebuilding project. Yet, by the time the reconstruction was completed in 1884 (again with the help of both Catholics and Protestants), the congregation ended up owing Astwood $250

48 The prosecution also credited one Madame Carnot for inspiring the collection of funds. I have yet to find more information regarding Madame Carnot.
Mexican pesos. In this version of events, the cunning American, Mr. Astwood swindled the ailing Dominican, Mr. Gross. It was a story that not only harked back to Astwood’s recent history with the bones of Columbus, but also evoked anti-imperialists feelings towards the United States, which since the 1880s had come to dominate the Dominican sugar industry and was gaining increased control over Dominican politics. If Joubert and Gibbes’s strategy worked, members of the tribunal would easily associate Astwood with U.S. imperialist actions towards the nation at large.

Moreover, the tribunal would come to see Astwood’s actions as amoral and in direct opposition to the virtuous principles of the Dominican nation. It was an easy accusation to make against a man already marred by political schemes. According to the prosecution, Astwood did not stop at indebting the Protestant congregation, but also illegally managed its financial affairs. Once again, Astwood appeared to be helping the congregation. “Seeing that this was an isolated Protestant church…he wanted to reunite it with the African Protestants in New York,” Joubert and Gibbes explained. This association with the U.S. meant that the American church would send missionaries to the Santo Domingo congregation. In return, the Dominican Protestants owed yearly dues to the AME denomination in the United States. Astwood arranged for the Dominican Protestant church to be incorporated into the AME Church during one of his trips to the U.S., but the cost of the yearly tribute was not made known to the Santo Domingo congregation. In order to pay it, Astwood required each member of the
congregation to pay one dollar (un peso fuerte). Then, at Astwood’s suggestion, the AME Church in the United States assumed the debt that the Santo Domingo church owed Astwood, paying him cash. This transaction changed Astwood’s “character into that of a trafficker.” It moreover demonstrated Astwood’s unprincipled actions as an overbearing leader, who believed he could do as he pleased with the finances of the church. Astwood’s critics would have immediately drawn parallels between this accusation and Astwood’s suspected involvement in business deals between U.S. entities and Ulises Heureaux, whose authoritarian ways had transformed his presidency into a dictatorship. These deals earned money for Astwood’s friend and political ally, but they had also greatly indebted the nation.

The nationalist Dominican Protestants would not tolerate Astwood’s schemes, including his latest one in which he claimed to hold singular responsibility for the reconstruction of the church building. By claiming to be the “reedificador,” Astwood was “making individual, the work of the collective, [which was] no longer Protestant but communal.” In other words, the whole Dominican community had contributed to the construction of the building in the Cuartel de las Milicias, and a single individual (Astwood) could not “absorb all of the moral personality of a congregation and transfer judiciary possession of...a group to one person or foreign group.” The fact that the Santo

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49 The exact words in Spanish are, “para pagar lo el Señor Astwood impuso como pastor, un peso fuerte.” The AME Church required that each member offer one dollar in order to raise funds for the church. This sum was referred to as the “dollar money,” and was instituted at the General Conference of 1868.
Domingo Protestant church was under the auspices of a foreign denomination for a time and was consecrated as an AME Church, did not strip the Dominican Protestants of their right to the building. Instead, the right to possess the temple, “depended and depends on the will of [the government] that granted the concession,” Joubert and Gibbes claimed. The tribunal should thus take into consideration the welfare of the whole (the Protestant Dominicans and the Dominican people at large), as well as the Protestants’ right to leave the AME Church.

As Joubert and Gibbes argued, the Protestants’ decision to cut ties with the AME Church in the United States was a direct result of Astwood’s schemes, which the Protestants believed were indicative of the moral stance of the entire AME denomination. Not only had Astwood abused his power as the congregation’s representative, but the church in the United States had never sent the missionaries that it had promised. After a while it seemed that the Missionary Board only sent preachers such as Astwood to collect the tribute owed to the denomination. “Not agreeing with the spiritual direction of the board,” the Protestant Methodists of Santo Domingo, “resolved to continue their services as before Mr. Astwood’s coming.” In this way they would also avoid being part of the controversy “that emerged in the heart of the ‘General Congregation’ [General Conference] because a great number of churches had left its
creed, thus diminishing... the moral prestige of that ‘Missionary Board.’” These assertions questioned the morality and credibility of the whole AME denomination.

In a way, the prosecution’s argument was not just a stand against Astwood and the AME Church, but it was also a challenge to an African American way of understanding race. Although the prosecution did not write about race specifically, in presenting their argument in nationalist terms, they distanced themselves from U.S. understandings of blackness, which were based upon an imagined diaspora as much as experiences of discrimination in the U.S. The break disrupted popular imaginings of the Negro race among African-Americans in the U.S. It signaled a failure of black cooperation and thus worked to counter the greater project of racial unity. Yet, in the Dominican Republic the break from the AME Church signaled an attempt to create political belonging within the nation. From the prosecution’s viewpoint, this case was nothing but a microcosm of American aggression towards the Dominican state. By proving themselves to be nationals against American imperialism, the Dominican Protestants challenged those within Dominican society who would shun them for their ethnicity and religion. The claim to Dominican nationality effectively erased race, and put the nation above racial and religious affiliation. It was a liberal viewpoint that

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50 Here, it is most likely that the prosecution was referring to the controversies taking place in other Caribbean islands.
coincided more with Astwood’s vision of the “Allen” Methodist Church than with the idea of a universal black race.\textsuperscript{51}

Joubert and Gibbes concluded their summary of the facts with the latest turn of events that had brought the Dominican Protestants to the First Instance Court: Astwood’s rampage and the subsequent ruling made by the alcalde, Magistrate Zabea. The Dominican Protestants, “whose rights of beliefs and exercise of services have been recognized because they were as Dominicans,” were conducting their religious services one night in the Cuartel de las Milicias. At the moment when they least expected it, “Mr. Astwood who calls himself the Superintendent [Presiding Elder] named by that church or Board of Missions, tried to impede them [from continuing] the religious ceremony.” He called them, “separatists and thus rebels and [reclaimed] the keys that the Dominican government did not give to the Board of Missions in the United States.” The matter was then brought before the alcalde, who ruled in favor of Astwood and even called the Dominican Protestants a “New Sect.” Yet, this assertion was both “surprising” and absurd, for the Dominican Protestants were the same as they had always been. They were “a congregation that found itself at the first dawn of the Republic.”

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\textsuperscript{51} See the introduction of this dissertation for a discussion of Astwood’s take on the AME Church’s name. See also, H.C.C. Astwood, “Shall the Name of the African Methodist Episcopal Church Be Changed to that of the Allen Methodist Episcopal Church?” \textit{AME Church Review} 4 (January 1888): 319.
“The prosecuting lawyers...have related the facts in their way and for their convenience,” wrote lawyer Vicente Galván. After remarking upon the brilliance of Joubert and Gibbes’ statement, he continued, “It is a shame that [their] record was not also correct nor conformed to historical truth because it would have saved us the trouble of having to write another account correcting many of the errors.”

Defending Henry Astwood in a thirty-four-page response to the prosecution, dated October 27, 1890, Galván provided an account of the immigrant history that in many ways resembled Joubert and Gibbes’s version. Galván’s interpretation, however, not only raised doubts about the “so-called” Dominican Protestants’ national identity and right to the property in the Cuartel de las Milicias, but it also propagated a certain vision of history in which

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52 Vicente Galván was a more practiced lawyer than Joubert and Gibbes. He was commissioned along with three other lawyers in 1883 to translate the French legal codes (civil, commercial, civil method, criminal, and penal) into Spanish. The translated version became Dominican law. Wesceslao B. Vega, Historia del Derecho Dominicano (Santo Domingo: Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo, 1986), 301.

53 Between August 14th and October 27th the lawsuit was delayed. The two parties met in court on September 3rd, 1890, but Galván referred to Astwood as the “the only boss in Santo Domingo of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.” This was not the way he had been addressed in the summons and other legal documentation, and Joubert and Gibbes refused to acknowledge the defense under this title. Consequently, on October 3rd, the primera instancia ruled that Astwood must answer the accusations with the title that had been prescribed, “Representative of the African Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States of North America and Superintendent of the mission’s work in Santo Domingo.” According to the primera instancia tribunal—which included Judges Avaro Lograno, César Nicolás Penson, Juan M. Bza Machos, and Fermín Gonzales Trio—this title was “perfectly consistent with the credentials [Astwood had received] from “the Annual Conference of New Jersey, presided by Bishop H.M. Turner,” and thus the court obliged him to refer to himself by the correct terms in the court proceedings. This ruling was registered on October 15, and Galván then presented his defense, with the correct title, on October 27th. The details of this mishap are described in the primera instancia ruling dated October 15, 1890 in Demanda por apelación de sentencia, DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.34-33, Leg. 34, Exp. 33, Year 1890.

54 Unless otherwise noted, the citations in this section come from this thirty-four page defense, which can be found in the First Instance court records. DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.34-33, Leg. 34, Exp. 33, Year 1890.
African Methodism came to signify an Afro-diasporic identity that superseded Dominican nationality.

The defense’s version of the facts began in 1776, the year the United States of America declared its independence from Britain. This early start to the historical record emphasized both the ethnic and racial origin of the so-called “Dominican Protestants.” According to Galván, in 1776 the United States was still yet marred in “contradictory and monstrous” error, for at the founding of the nation the “generous and noble ideals” of “complete Liberty and Equality in everything and for everyone,” were also stained by the “repugnance of the races.” This contradiction “has forever marked the pages of [the United States’] otherwise very brilliant History,” wrote Galván, as he continued to explain that people of color did not have a temple to praise “the Great Architect of all creation.” Although he refused to give a detailed account of the “physical and moral suffering” that Africans and their descendants experienced in the United States, he made a point to mention that African Methodist Episcopalians were at first allowed to have their own temples directed by white clergy. Then due to the “great liberal and anti-slavery movement,” they were supported by the Pennsylvania legislature and allowed to legally incorporate as the African Methodist Episcopal Church under the leadership of Reverend Richard Allen in 1776. This date was purposefully misrepresented. The AME church was founded in 1787.
Protestant community in Santo Domingo to the history of African-Americans in the United States and the rise of the AME Church.

Yet, most likely unbeknownst to the judges, 1776 was in fact an erroneous date, for the first AME Church was founded in Philadelphia in 1787 and the denomination was incorporated in 1816. Misquoted on purpose, the year 1776 linked the establishment of the AME Church to the liberal ideals of “Liberty and Equality” in the American Revolution, and not the “Liberty and Equality” of another insurgence: the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804). The ties between the Haitian Revolution and the rise of the AME Church, however, were well documented by other AME leaders in the 1890s. In 1891, Daniel Payne, a bishop of the AME Church known for his work in education and missions, wrote, “As the Haytians have completely thrown off the white man’s yoke in their national affairs, so have the leaders and members of the AME Church in ecclesiastical affairs.”

Theophilus Gould Steward, the former secretary of the AME Church’s missionary department who visited Haiti in 1873, later stated that the Haitian

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Revolution was the “special heritage of the Negro race.” Indeed, “the Haitian Revolution created a new vista for African Americans,” for “African Americans’ aspirations to freedom were in no way fulfilled by the American Revolution.” Galván’s attempt to associate the founding of the AME Church with the American Revolution was thus false and purposefully misleading for it sought to disassociate the church from its long history of connection with Haiti.

To further distance the church from Haiti, the defense denigrated Haitian rule. Galván described the Haitian occupation period as, “days of great misfortune and great shame for our unfortunate Quisqueya.” During that time, Boyer governed the nation and, “the hated bicolor flag of our eternal western enemies floated insolently in the public buildings of this Capital city.” Although this language was slightly more evocative than that of the prosecution, Boyer’s tactic was basically the same. Like the prosecution, he argued that it was Boyer’s decision and political calculation to bring black emigrants from the United States to Hispaniola in 1824 in order to populate the island with members of the black race. These words simultaneously linked the Americans to a time prior to Dominican independence, while it also distanced them

from the accusation of trying to change the “social appearance” of the island, which was blamed on Boyer.60

Unlike the prosecution, however, Galván did not address the immigrants’ contributions to Dominican society. Instead, he emphasized the prestige of the AME denomination. He claimed that, “with [racial] intolerance subdued [in the United States], this church began to expand so much that in a brief time its temples were raised in all of the North American cities.” According to Galván, the AME denomination also existed in many cities in South and Central America, Haiti, and the Bermuda Islands, where the local government supported it financially.61 By 1890, the denomination had “500,000 members, 4,000 priests, and 12 bishops.” It also ran various colleges and seminaries where its clergy, “learn above all to respect the discipline that Mr. Goodin has taken so little [in mind].” This portrayal of the AME church created an idealistic denominational history that emphasized the popularity, prominence, and organizational integrity of the denomination, and contrasted with Joubert and Gibbes’ depiction of an immoral church. It also underscored the fact that the AME Church had created by-laws (the Discipline) that served as the “principal element…for the regular and harmonious functioning of all

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60 It should be noted that besides blaming Boyer for attempting to change the physical appearance of the island, there is nothing overtly racist in either the prosecution’s or the defense’s statements regarding Haiti. Rather, the documents adopt a nationalist tone.

61 I have yet to find evidence that the AME Church existed in Central America during this time. It was only in 1903 that a missionary established the AME church in Mexico, and there is no evidence that this church survived. P.E. J.R. Cox, “The AME Church in Mexico,” Voice of Missions 11 no. 7 (July 1903): 3.
institutions.” As a well-established institution, the AME Church held authority over its members, who were expected to uphold the denomination’s virtuous principles.

Galván warned that the dissidents of the AME Church, the so-called “Dominican Protestants,” were in actuality apostates and ultraliberals, who did not believe in God or social order. Their outlook on life would lead to the destruction of Dominican society, for they desired to create, “A family without a leader, a society without laws, the State without Government, Protestantism without bishops and ministers, and Roman Catholicism without images, nor temples, nor popes, nor archbishops, nor priests.” The nation and its institutions relied on these basic structures of governance and law. To forsake such institutions was to become part of, “the pernicious, ultra-liberal school,” that believed, “that man should no longer have God, nor laws, nor faith other than that dictated by their own limited reason.” Goodin and his followers, according to Galván, belonged to this group working towards anarchy in Dominican society.

Galván’s strategy thus relied on two tactics that both contributed to his construction of a historical narrative. First, he used historical details—dates and names—to gain credibility, undermine the prosecution’s claim to Dominican nationality, and assert the dominance of the immigrant descendants’ American heritage. Second, Galván took advantage of Dominican cultural values that linked respect for authority
with morality, and understood morality as the base of Dominican society. To this end, like the prosecution, Galván also wrote of a dichotomy between the two groups. His comparison, however, was not based on the duality between nationalist and imperialist, but on the separation between authority and apostasy. Towards the end of his narrative, this duality became an individual comparison between Astwood and Goodin, thus allowing Galván to claim that the controversy was nothing more than a singular rebellion of an individual who had caused division within the AME Church. In order to make this argument, he had to first narrate the history of the church.

According to Galván, the AME Church had always been part of Dominican society. The church was embodied in the black immigrants who came from the United States in 1824. He reported that about 2800 immigrants arrived in Santo Domingo on the vessel Aramata steered by a man named Capitan Hall. Among them included, “George Harris, Jacob Pierson, Jacob Roberts, Thomas Clair, James Falls, William Jackson and others.” These migrants were all “adherents of the African Methodist Episcopal religion...”

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62 According to Dominican historian Mu-Kien A. Sang, during this period, Heureaux developed the ideological concepts of “nationality, legality, and morality,” in order to garnered support for his dictatorship. “The ideas of nationality and legality were aimed to educated the population around determined political ideas; morality, on the contrary, aimed to incentivize existing values in the population, especially religious values” (111). Here, Sang refers directly to the Catholic Church, but I claim that this concept of “morality” extended to the Protestants in this lawsuit and thus when Galván spoke of apostasy, immorality was implied. Mu-Kien A. Sang, Ulises Heureaux: Biografía de un dictador (Santo Domingo: Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo, 1989), 105-113.
of the United States.” In this interpretation, the 1824 migration was nothing more than an exodus of African Methodists to the island.

Like the prosecution, Galván explained that the African Methodists moved in and out of three buildings. Unlike the prosecution, Galván stated that these buildings were all granted during the period of Haitian rule. “What a rare thing!” Galván wrote, “Even though [Boyer] was Haitian, he was tolerant, liberal and progressive,” for he not only guaranteed the African Methodists religious freedom, but he also gave them a building that “would serve them as the African Methodist Episcopal temple.” This place was called the “Solar,” and it existed next to the Church of Las Mercedes. The Catholic clergy, however, complained to the government about the Protestants’ loud and expressive services that took place during the same time as the Catholic rituals. The Haitian government then begged the African Methodists to leave the Solar and accept the “old ruins of the former San Francisco convent.” While the congregation repaired the building, it met in the homes of Mr. Francis Robert and Uncle Falls, who was authorized by “The Bishop in New York” to officiate over the congregation as the pastor. Then in 1833, the hurricane that disrupted the funeral of the Catholic priest, Father Ruiz, also

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63 It is important to note that the defense’s report of the “Hechos” was more detailed than that of the prosecution. The level of detail reflected Astwood’s knowledge of the contemporary hierarchical structure of the AME Church in the United States. It also indicates that Astwood may have had the support of an older generation of African-American immigrants who were able to supply additional details about the migration experience.
destroyed the San Francisco convent. At that time, “the Haitian government donated to
the North Americans the place known as the ‘Cuartel de las Milicias.’” Emphasizing the
immigrants’ religious identity, Galván explained that the North Americans then
“publicly inaugurated...the current African Methodist Episcopal Church...in 1834 with
Isaac Miller as preacher.” This version of the facts, as the primera instancia tribunal would
have noted, differed substantially from the story that Joubert and Gibbes told. In stating
that the buildings were granted during Haitian rule, Galván’s version established the
AME Church’s hold over the property in the Cuartel de las Milicias at a much earlier
period (1833) than Joubert and Gibbes’s (1865).

This narrative, however, necessitated the obfuscation of events since 1833. In
explaining the nearly fifty-year period between 1833 and 1882, Galván minimized the
role of the Dominican government and the concessions it made to the immigrants. Of the
period between 1844-1882, all he wrote was:

“The year 1844 arrived with the Independence of the homeland. The Dominican
government proved itself liberal, sanctioning without limitations or restrictions the act of donation made in
favor of said Protestant sect...Later with the annexation of the Dominican Republic to the Spanish Monarchy, the right that the Protestant African Methodists had to publicly celebrate their religious services was prohibited; but when the Homeland was

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64 Here, Galván refers to the hurricane of Padre Ruíz that took place on September 23, 1834. Roberto Marte
describes the storm in, “Sociedad y economía en Santo Domingo, 1795-1844,” in Historia de La República
Dominicana, ed. Frank Moya Pons (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas y Academia
Dominicana de la Historia, 2010), 126. Stuart Schwartz also mentions the Dominican practice of naming
storms after famous people. See Stuart Schwartz, Sea of Storms: A History of Hurricanes in the Greater Caribbean
from Columbus to Katrina (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 379.
vindicated in 1865, the members of this Church returned to freely and publically celebrate [their] divine religious services.”

In this brief summary, Galván gave no insight on the juridical identity of the “Protestant African Methodists,” many of whom by 1889 were born in the Dominican Republic and were thus Dominicans by law.  

In this summary and previous descriptions of the Protestants, the immigrants and their descendants were not “Dominicans,” but “North Americans.” They were not merely, “Protestants,” but “African Methodists.” These descriptions provided no space for the Protestants’ participation in the Dominican nation as “Dominican nationals,” even though Galván provided no evidence of continued communication between the AME Church in the U.S. and the Dominican-based congregation post 1834. “African Methodism” (not Dominican nationality) was an essential quality that transcended time and cut across over fifty years of near non-communication between the AME Church in the U.S. and its branch in Santo

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65 Only months after Astwood’s arrival, the Dominican government required all foreigners to register at the gubernatorial offices throughout the country. Article 6 of the resolutions decreed by President Fernando Arturo de Meriño stated, that “No foreigner that has opted for Dominican nationality, held a public salaried office, or signed a public document of national political character, will be considered any other nationality other than Dominican, while residing in the Republic.” Under this decree, the immigrants and their descendants were counted as Dominicans. It is also important to note, that Astwood misinterpreted the meaning of this article. In his translation, he wrote, “no foreigner who having adopted the Dominican Nationality by occupying a public or salaried position...” Astwood to the Secretary of State, June 2, 1882. Despatches from United States Consuls in Santo Domingo, 1837-1906, Microcopy No. T-56. Roll 10, February 1, 1882-October 31, 1883. The Dominican Civil Code of 1884 also stated, “All persons that have been born or were born in the territory of the Republic, whatever the nationality of their parents, are Dominican.” Vega, Historia del Derecho Dominicano, 302.
Domingo. Thus, the AME Church could rightfully claim legitimate ownership of the building in the Cuartel de las Milicias.

To substantiate the conflation of African Methodism with American black immigrant ethnicity, Galván wrote of the loyalty of the Protestant denomination to the AME Church. He explained that after earning the right to free religious expression in 1844, “The African Methodist Episcopalians continued peacefully in the free exercise of their services, always rejecting with just indignation the intrigues of the Wesleyan Missionaries.” According to Galván, the Wesleyans “would come often to the country with the purpose of disuniting [the African Methodists] and making them integrate in [the Wesleyan] denomination.” Yet, the efforts of the “illustrious Wesleyan Reverends Tindal, Towler, and others,” were always unsuccessful.66 This depiction, however, was a fabrication that was not based in historical fact, for throughout the nineteenth century the Protestant community had invited the Wesleyans to take charge of the group. Ignoring this fact, Galván’s blamed the congregation’s current problems entirely on Goodin, who he accused of being “a friend of [the Wesleyans].” “It is only thanks to Mr. Goodin, recently assigned to [the Wesleyans], that the African Methodist Episcopal unity in Santo Domingo has received a violent shake,” Galván stated. He then

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66 Wesleyan missionaries John Tindall and William Towler began their work in the 1830s. Tindall arrived in Puerto Plata in December 1834. A year later, he was named chair of the Haiti District, which included Puerto Plata, the Turk’s Islands, Port-au-Prince, and Cap Haytien. He left the Dominican Republic in 1839. Towler arrived in 1838 and took over the work at Puerto Plata. George Gillanders Findlay and William West Holdsworth, The History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (London: Epworth Press, 1921), 492-495.
condemned Goodin for deceiving members of the AME congregation into uniting with the Wesleyan church. Goodin, the apostate, had injured the AME Church, which had long held authority over the Protestants in Santo Domingo.

Galván elaborated on the dichotomy between authority and apostasy in his comparison of Astwood and Goodin. His depiction of Astwood followed that of Cladio’s, Mev’s and other AME leaders who lauded Astwood for his work in Santo Domingo. According to Galván, prior to Astwood’s arrival in 1882, the African Methodists had abandoned the property in the Cuartel de las Milicias because of the building’s poor structural integrity. The “extreme poverty in which the parishioners lived,” meant that they were unable to repair it, even though they were “desperate to have a temple worthy of the name.” It was for this reason that Astwood arrival in April 1882 was met with great rejoicing among the Methodists in Santo Domingo. They expressed “even greater happiness when they saw that having only just arrived, Mister Astwood rented a house and provided an organ, platform, chairs, and lamps,” for the congregation. According to Galván, Astwood organized the “only decent [AME temple] the country has seen since 1824,” and then officiated as the minister of the church, which grew under his leadership. When the house that Astwood was renting for the congregation became too small, it was Astwood who, “thought to himself” of the building in the Cuartel de las Milicias and began to collect money from “foreigners and nationals, Protestants and non-Protestants.” Thus, when the church was inaugurated on
August 24, 1884, the public celebration involved the “Government, the city council, and a great number of the most renowned people in society.” During this event, everyone congratulated the African Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States, “and there was not a voice that back then would have said the contrary,” wrote Galván. As the sole instigator of the AME Church’s recent endeavors, Astwood had led the reconstruction project for the building in the Cuartel de las Milicias, and all of Dominican society had recognized this work.

It was Goodin’s arrival in 1889 that brought problems. In Galván’s version of the story, between 1884 and 1889, Astwood led a small group of local men (Mevs, Cladio, Williams, Hall, and Rodgers) who took over the quotidian operations of the church when Astwood’s work as U.S. Consul increased. These leaders, however, “remained always under the superior hierarchical orders of Reverend Sr. Astwood,” who was the superintendent. From this perspective, Astwood alone was the “only boss in Santo Domingo of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.” Goodin, however, challenged Astwood’s authority. According to Galván, Goodin came to the Dominican Republic, “not as a Priest, not as a Pastor, not as a Minister, not as a Deacon or Sub-deacon, but purely and simply as an Assistant Preacher because Mister Goodin never received any

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67 Galván also states that these men were ordained by Bishop Campbell in 1887, as described in previous chapters of this dissertation.
68 This was the nomenclature that Astwood and Galván had previously used in their proceedings before it was rejected by the tribunal.
holy orders.” A British Caribbean subject and foreigner to the Dominican Republic, Goodin was not a member of the historic American immigrant group. Yet, he complained about the conditions, and Astwood “persuaded the parishioners to agree to give Mister Goodin the two collections of the first and third Sunday each month for his personal expenses.” Astwood also made other financial arrangements for Goodin and the deacon Cladio Francois after he left for the United States. Goodin seemed to accept these plans, but as soon as Astwood was in the U.S. Goodin began to write letters to bishop Tanner and Astwood in which he expressed his discontent. When the bishop did not respond directly to his requests for a salary, Goodin rebelled. According to Galván, the “impatient Mister Goodin…took advantage of Mr. Astwood’s absence to introduce disaccord, indiscipline, and rebellion in a Church that for sixty-six years had seen all of its members united.” Bent on revenge and financial gain, Goodin had persuaded some of the parishioners to join the Wesleyan church. “Truly sad the mission of Mr. Goodin!” wrote Galván.

In comparing Goodin to Astwood, Galván individualized the issue and attempted to show that the disagreement was singular and personal in its nature. This portrayal of the controversy, however, masked other factors such as the involvement of Alejandro Gross and the possibility of a Wesleyan take-over. Yet, Alejandro Gross was

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69 These arrangements are described above. Goodin was to continue receiving his salary. The collection of the second Sunday was to be given to Cladio and the fourth was for the congregation’s expenses.
one of Goodin’s key collaborators. As a descendant of American immigrants and the son of Elijah Gross, Alejandro also wielded a great deal of influence over the congregation, and Astwood later implied that Alejandro sought to inherit the congregation from his father. Tactfully, Galván only mentioned Gross once in his narration, so as not to distract from his framing of Goodin as the sole instigator. This strategy undermined the prosecution’s nationalist claims since Goodin was not Dominican. The only connection that Goodin could then claim to the American immigrant group was through the ecclesiastical hierarchy that he had breached. This hierarchy perpetuated the organizational structure of a U.S. institution (bishops, presiding elders, elders, deacons, and preachers) in a foreign land.

Isolating Goodin as the sole problem, also allowed Galván to mask the fact that a sector of the congregation had indeed decided to join the Wesleyan church. Galván blamed Goodin for “working to convert the recently named Dominican Protestants into Methodists of the Wesleyan sect of St. Thomas,” but he did not mention the troubles that the AME Church simultaneously face in St. Thomas. This information would have supported the prosecution’s accusation that the church had lost its moral prestige.70 Additionally, the prospect of the congregation’s integration into the British Wesleyan church was perhaps the greatest factor motivating Astwood’s ire. The move would not

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70 Whether or not Galván knew that the AME Church in St. Thomas had withdrawn from the U.S. church is not certain, yet he most likely would not have revealed this fact even if he had known. It is most likely that Astwood did know, even if he did not reveal it to his lawyer.
only signify his own personal failure in Santo Domingo, but the failure of racial unity within the AME Church against the organization of white missionaries that spanned the Caribbean. Most likely mindful of events taking place in St. Thomas, Galván carefully stuck to his story. Prior to Goodin, the congregation had been, “completely faithful and submissive to the orders of the Board of Bishops, which it had always obeyed.” After Goodin, the congregation had defected.

Like the prosecution, Galván also concluded his version of the facts with the latest turn of events. Astwood returned to the Dominican Republic and took the matter into his own hands. “My representative, Mr. Astwood, immediately made the necessary arrangements so that the individual of the new sect would no longer profane the temple where the African Methodist Episcopal services were always practiced,” wrote Galván. He then explained that when Astwood could not obtain his goals, he “publically excommunicated the principal authors, Mr. Goodin and Gross,” and named another governing board for the local church.71 These changes, however, made no difference for the church building remained in Sr. Goodin’s power. Considering that “only a few African Methodists Episcopalians have abjured from the faith,” and under the threat that the “temple would continue under the power of individuals from Jamaica and St. Thomas,” Astwood resolved to bring the matter before the constitutional mayor of the

71 The new board included Francois Claudio, Adam Rogers, Peter Nathaniel, Emily Myers, and Joseph Rentonince. Of these names, I’ve only been able to identify Claudio and Rodgers as descendants of immigrants.
city. The mayor ruled in favor of Astwood and demanded that the building be returned to the African Methodist Episcopalians, but Goodin appealed the sentence. “These are the facts,” wrote Galván in conclusion. The AME parishioners now awaited another favorable ruling, for both history and law—as he would continue to argue—proved their case.

4.3 The “Derechos”: Property Law in Goodin vs. Astwood

Narrating the facts was just one part of claiming rights to the church building. As custom, both the prosecution and defense also had to justify their claims through legal discourse. Both sides used the Dominican Civil Code and French legal scholarship regarding property law to argue that the Dominican government had granted them the rights to the property.72 Their arguments, however, were completely opposite from one another. On the one hand, Goodin’s lawyers claimed that the church building actually belonged to the Dominican State because it legally fell under national domain. It therefore could not be privately owned by anyone, but existed for the free use of all Dominicans. On the other hand, Astwood’s lawyer insisted that the building was private property conceded to the African Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States.

72 After the War of Restoration, the Dominican government reestablished the legislation from the First Republic. An August 6, 1865 degree reinstated the “French Codes of the Restoration, with the modifications that contain the organic law of May 19, 1855.” Reinstating the French codes, however, caused the same problems of translation as during the First Republic. It was not until 1884, that Congress approved the Dominican translated version of the French Civil Code, which was only slightly modified to become the Dominican Civil Code. Vega, Historia del derecho dominicano, 298-304.
These two arguments revealed larger issues at stake, and acted as a microcosm of broader debates about nationals’ versus foreigners’ rights to land in the Dominican Republic.73

Having established the Dominican Protestants’ right to the property based on their nationality, Joubert and Gibbes claimed that the law of national domain protected their Dominican clients’ interests.74 Just as the nationality of their clients eclipsed the foreign status of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and its representative, Mr. Astwood, so too did the right of national domain exceed that of private ownership. The Dominican nation, they argued, had interests that were not subject to the private market, and the building in which the Dominican Protestants worshiped fell within these interests. It therefore could not be owned by anyone other than the Dominican government, and neither a foreign institution, such as the AME Church, nor the rightful recipients of the concession (the Dominican Protestants) had the right to privatize the building. Only the State had the power to release the building into the private sector where it could be traded.

73 Although this lawsuit does not debate the issue of foreign acquisition of terrenos comuneros, the tensions that existed in such arguments are present in this case. As Vega states, “In this period, the difficulty of application of the Civil Codes regarding restate property rights really became apparent, which caused not a few lawsuits, in which generally the losers were peasants, those who could not present property titles, or those whose titles were old or not exact enough…False titles began to proliferate thanks to the primitive and frail system of property registration.” Ibid., 296-297.
74 The first application of national domain took place in 1870 and declared the Alcázar de Colón a national monument subject to public domain with inalienable rights. Ibid., 296.
Joubert and Gibbes thus asserted that the AME Church in the United States had no right to claim ownership of a property that belonged to the nation. In doing so, Astwood threatened Dominican sovereignty. Drawing a parallel between the Protestants and the Catholic Church, Joubert and Gibbes further explained, “[It is] as if the Church of Rome...at seeing that the national Dominican clergy refused to recognize the spiritual power of Rome, came to reclaim for the [Catholic Church], the possession of the buildings that, like the one in question, belong to National Domain!”

The Protestant church building, like Catholic parishes, belonged to the Dominican State. If the First Instance court were to uphold the alcalde’s ruling in favor of Astwood, it would deprive the Nation of its own rights.

To justify this claim, the prosecution turned to French property law. Using the Dominican Civil Code and works by an array of French legal scholars, Joubert and Gibbes argued that “juridical possession” existed as a legal means to legitimize and protect the rights of property. In legal terms, “possession” was based on two conditions: the occupation of the property and the animus domini, or intent of ownership. In the first case, a person proved ownership by physically occupying the property “peacefully,

75 Unless otherwise noted, the citations in this section come from the twenty-nine page prosecution, which can be found in the First Instance court records, DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.34-33, Leg. 34, Exp. 33, Year 1890.
76 Joubert and Gibbes referred to nine different legal scholars and theorists, including Baudry-Lacatineire, Pierre-Joseph Prudhon, Jacques Curasson, Jean-Marie Pardessus, León Wodon, Jean Baptiste Sirey, and Pierre Gilbert. Two other scholars “Lerey” and “Rische” were also referenced, but I have not been able to identify them.
publically, and in a continual uninterrupted manner." *Animus domini* was then proven by the nature of occupation. In lawsuits about possession, the law only protected the person who could prove occupation and *animus domini* because these were the only legal conditions that granted juridical possession.

Yet, this law seemed to pose a problem when it came to national domain. First, the mere detention of a building, “does not give enough juridical force necessary for rights against third parties” who may make claims to the property. On the one hand, there was no way of establishing whether an offense had been committed. On the other hand, the interests of many should be considered above that of private interests. In other words, the Dominican Protestants did not have the power to claim the property for themselves. They were intermediaries, like “the trustee, the tutor, [and] the husband,” who acted as administrators for the owner that they represented. Since the Dominican Protestants did not own the building themselves, they had no recourse against third parties, such as Astwood. It was the owner, the Nation, that had to decide who had

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77 Joubert and Gibbes noted that article 2.229 of the Civil Code gave the conditions for juridical possession. The exact wording of Article 2.229 is, “Para poder prescribir, se necesita una posesion continua y no interrumpida, pacifica, pública, inequívoca y á título de propietario.” Código civil de la República Dominicana: Arreglado por la comision nombrada por el Poder Ejecutivo y conforme al decreto del Congreso Nacional de fecha 4 de julio, conservando el orden de los artículos del texto Frances Vijente en la Republica desde el año de 1845 (Santo Domingo: Imprenta de Garcia Hermanos, 1883), 175.

78 The exact language that Joubert and Gibbes may help clarify this claim. They wrote, “La detencion material de la cosa si es inmueble no tiene por si sola la fuerza jurídica necesaria para fundar en ella derechos contra terceros: la lei no ha podido presentar incentivos al delito por una parte, y por otra, ha debido colocar el interés jeneral por encima del interés particular.” Spelling was irregular during the time period, hence words like “lei” and “jeneral.”
rights to the property, and in this case Joubert and Gibbes argued that the interests of the whole should be considered over that of the individual. In this way, both private and public goods were protected from exploitation and “plundering.”

In order to demonstrate that the State was in fact the true owner of the property, Joubert and Gibbes provided a legal definition of national, or “public domain.” According to the lawyers, public domain “indicates a jurisdiction with greater extension and potency than that attributed to individuals or collectives of one or many purposes, [such as] as charity, commercial, cultural, artistic, social [goals].” Public domain represented a “political and social reality that embraces a determined group within the civil and political sphere.” It indicated social and economic force that “gave the nation its international character,” and on the basis of all of these activities the nation held financial interests. Some of the interests existed in the form of property and were left for the common heritage (patrimonio comun). Some existed for the maintenance of the State (ie. administrative buildings), and some were left for the State to administer freely as it wished. All such property, however, remained under national domain.

Joubert and Gibbes claimed that properties under national domain were not subject to commerce. In other words, individuals could not appropriate and sell national property for their own gain. The lawyers claimed that French, Belgian and Dutch legal experts all agreed on this point, and the most authoritative voices on the subject—Pierre-
Joseph Proudhon, Jacques Curasson, and Léon Wadon—only differed slightly. To further evidence their claim, the lawyers turned to the Civil Code and other legal experts for definitions of national domain and explanations of what types of property existed under its jurisdiction. Articles 538 and 540 of the Civil Code listed “public streets and roads, beaches and cemeteries, churches and other public buildings,” as public domain. Public domain also included entities for which “every individual (in abstract) has an interest” and which “no one in the juridical sense owned” because the nation was the proprietor. Thus, “hospitals, churches, institutes, observatories…everything that the State, through the nation, has dedicated for the common education and general instruction,” were also included. The government administered these entities to ensure that everyone could enjoy their direct and indirect benefits, and they were therefore not subject to the same restrictions as private goods which could be individually owned and sold.

There were, of course, important caveats, and Joubert and Gibbes explained two of them. First, within the list of things considered under public domain, churches and cemeteries were actually a more complicated case than they appeared to be. Private

79 In Joubert and Gibbes words, “Prudhon, por ejemplo, confunde el dominio público con la cosas públicas; Curasson toma como causa, como motivo de que las cosas del dominio público no puedan ser objeto de acción posesoria, el hecho de que no puedan presentar y Wodon atribuye a lo último la causa de lo primero.”

80 At this point, they cited Curasson and Pardessus, Wodon, Lerey y Gilbert, and Rische. They also included a broader discussion of what exactly “public domain” entailed, reiterating many of their previous points.
societies could erect and sustain churches and cemeteries on private property, and in these cases such properties were not considered public domain. Only the churches and cemeteries that “have been granted by legal means in a more or less restrictive way” were included under public domain. In other words, restrictive concessions, such as the building granted to the Dominican Protestants, remained under public domain. Second, the government could not grant properties under national domain to private parties “so that they would then fall under common law,” unless it first removed these properties from the public domain. Léon Wodon was one of the legal scholars that clearly explained this situation. After the French Revolution, churches were considered outside of the private commerce, not because of their sacred character but because they formed part of the public domain. They were dedicated to the public’s use, “and they [would] enter into commerce as soon as their [public purpose (destinación)] had ceased,” quoted the lawyers.81

Joubert and Gibbes insisted that these caveats did not apply to the building that the Dominican Protestants occupied, which had been granted restrictively and thus fell under public domain. They then asked a set of rhetorical questions. “Who has the

81 Article 429 of Wodon says, “Les églises et cimetières ne sont plus aujourd’hui mises hors du commerce à cause de leur caractère sacré, comme res sacrae, res divini juris. Tous les auteurs admettent que, depuis l’ère nouvelle de la révolution française, ces choses ne sont hors du commerce que pour autant qu’on les envisage comme faisant partie du domaine public, comme consacrées à l’usage du public; et qu’elles rentrent dans le commerce dès que leur destination a cessé.” M. Léon Wodon, Traité theorique et pratique de la possession et des actions possessoires, vol. 2 (Bruxelles: Bruylant-Christophe & Compagnie, Libraires-Editeurs, 1866), 49.
juridical possession of the things under public domain, and in particular churches? 

...Can you trade the property of the nation? Can you plunder the nation, submitting to foreign hands that which you can not even give to nationals?” This last inquiry summarized the basic question that Joubert and Gibbes posed to the court. Would the Dominican government protect foreigners over nationals? It was a question that not only applied to the Dominican Protestants, but to the Dominican nation at large, for in recent years the Dominican government under the Heureaux dictatorship had seemed to favor foreigners’—and especially Americans’—interests over those of its own people.

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Once again, Galván noted the brilliance of the prosecuting lawyers’ “sophisticated argumentation,” but this time he called for a “moment of reflection.” The “hopes of the opposition” he claimed, were based on “false premises and even more false, albeit ingenious, conclusions with which their discourse deceives everyone.” Requesting the Tribunal’s patience, Galván asked that they excuse him for “following step by step my illustrious colleagues in their long excursion through the camp of those brilliant juridical doctrines that do not have appropriate application in this case.” He then proceeded to dismantle Joubert and Gibbes’ legal arguments one by one.

To begin, Galván stated plainly that the prosecution accurately defined “juridical possession,” but the law of public domain did not apply in the lawsuit at hand. Galván agreed with Joubert and Gibbes that property under public domain had inalienable
rights and were not subject to commerce, but he argued that, “the present lawsuit is not about this type of property.” The lawsuit was about a destitute building in the *Caurtel de las Milicias* that, “by virtue of a governing act,” had been transferred from private State property to private property of a determined religious sect. The building was in fact privately owned because the African Methodist Episcopalians had the “indisputable right to close the doors of its temple, during its divine services, to all who are not of its religion.” Galván stated that the fact this privately-owned status undermined the prosecution; “All of the opposition’s defense falls for lack of foundation.” The lawsuit was not a case about public domain at all, and Astwood “had the perfect right to ask the alcaldía to keep him in possession of the building that was donated to his sect.” In short, the opposition had no basis for which to claim that the alcalde’s ruling was unjust.

To elaborate, Galván explained the legal difference between public and private State property. This explanation was needed, he stated, because there was “a total lack of precision, clarity or opportunity,” when it came to Joubert and Gibbes’ explanation of public property. According to Galván, the law, “clearly and perfectly distinguished between public property and private property of the State. The Civil Code addressed public State property in articles 714 and 358. Such property included “rodes, rivers, shorelines, streets, forts, and others.”\(^2\) These entities belonged to no one and they were

\(^2\) Galván misquoted article 358 and actually referenced article 538, which states, “Los caminos, vías y calles que están á cargo del Estado, los ríos, navegables ó flotables, las orillas, las ensenadas y bahías en el mar, puertos, radas y en general todas las porciones del territorio dominicano, que no son susceptibles de
not susceptible to private property. Private property of the State, however, included “everything that for which the State holds the title of proprietor.” These properties existed within the market and they could be “sold, rented, and donated.” The State could not donate a street or a river, but it could, “donate the property or the use of land to one or more individuals so that on it they could raise an agricultural establishment, a private house, a theater, a circus, a school or a Church.” This is what had happened in the case of the AME Church and many other private groups. Galván offered other examples of the State’s private donations that existed in Dominican society, including a house donated for a school and a library; a building given to freemasons for a workshop; land given to individuals for agricultural manufacturing; and the abandoned ruins of buildings that were later turned into an insane asylum or charity house, and a teacher’s institute. “From the moment that the State donates it,” Galván argued, “the…private property of the State becomes private property of the grantee.” At that point, the newly designated private property becomes susceptible to “possession, prescription, and lawsuits of reintegration.”

In corroborating this explanation, Galván turned to the popular work of François Laurent, Principes de Droit Civil (1878). Quoting from volume 6, he cited that, “The State has two domains, the public domain and the private domain. The goods that it possesses

propiedad particular, se considerarán como dependencias del dominio publico.” Article 714 states, “Hay cosas que á nadie pertenecen, y cuyo uso es comun á todos. Las leyes de policía regulan el modo de disfrutarlas.” Código civil de la República Dominicana, 40, 54.
can pass from one to the other domain." He continued to quote the rest of the text, which reiterated what he had already said about the difference between public and private domain. Then, in a quote that merged two sentences from distinct passages, Galván again cited Laurent. “The law says that there are common [or national] goods over which the habitants have rights. This is an error that was not in the mind of the legislator,” he wrote. Together these two sentences (from pages 88 and 73 respectively) implied that the common understanding of public domain was a misinterpretation of the meaning of the law. After citing these two sentences Galván continued quoting from page 89 (the words Galván added are in italics). “When the Commons or the Nation possesses houses and land, the inhabitants do not have the pleasure of using them. It is the Commons or the Government who utilizes and uses them, or who rents, leases, or donates them.” Despite inaccuracy in this citation, Galván’s interpretation of Laurent was meant to leave little doubt as to whether the Dominican public had any control over


In coupling these two sentences, Galván intentionally misled the tribunal. When Laurent wrote the second sentence, “les termes de la loi pourraient induire en erreur sur la pensé du législateur,” he was not referring to habitants’ rights over common goods (in other words, public domain), but unalienable and alienable rights of the Nation. See article 51 of Laurent, *Principes de droit*, 73.

Galván correctly interpreted Laurent in this quote, although he did not provide the full text. In the original text, Laurent states, “Quand la commune possède des maisons et des terres, les habitants n’en jouissent pas ; la communes les loue, et les loyers ou fermages figurant au budget des recettes et servent a supporter les charges qui incombent à la commune. Tandis que les habitants eux-mêmes jouissent du produit des biens communaux proprement dits, tels que les bois dont les coupes sont distribuées entre eux en tout ou en partie.” Here, Laurent highlights the difference between private and public State land. The government uses the proceeds of private land to support itself while the habitants get direct benefits from the public land. Ibid., 89.
national land once it had passed from the public to the private domain of the state. According to Galván, the law was clear: the public had no rights to private state property.

Galván also clarified that it was wrong to claim that churches could fall within the public domain because the Dominican Republic was a liberal country where the separation of Church and State existed. Only in intolerant countries, “in which the State had an official religion; in other words, in countries where fanaticism and religious intolerance did not allow for the celebration of other divine services,” did churches fall under public domain, he claimed. In such nations, Galván argued that the church was considered public because it was “built…with State funds, sustain with public funds, [and] subsidized its clergy with funds from the national treasury.” Thus, no one could claim to own the church since it was “owned by everyone.” Yet, in places where religious tolerance ruled—such as the Dominican Republic—each sect privately owned its building. Thus, “besides the Asian pagoda, a Turkish mosque is raised, and next to the Turkish mosque, the Hebrew synagogue, and next to the Hebrew synagogue, the Protestant temple, and next to the Protestant temple, proud and dominating all the rest the lofty tower of the splendid Catholic cathedral.” For Galván, the very fact that buildings of various religions existed within the Dominican Republic was enough to prove that a State religion did not exist and that religious buildings were not under
public domain. Evidently, he ignored the fact that Catholicism was the official religion of the country, and the Catholic Church regularly received financial gifts from the Dominican President.

Noting the caveats that Joubert and Gibbes included in their exposition, Galván suggested that the prosecution had misunderstood the writings of the legal scholar León Wodon. He accused them of looking at French scholarship “for whatever opinion on which to base this case.” “The opposition turned to Woodom [sic]...for their defense,” he stated, “even though Woodom [wrote] a sentiment radically opposite to theirs.”

Galván referred specifically to Joubert and Gibbes’ citation of Wodon, which he quoted:

“All of the authors admit that after the new era of the French Revolution, these things (churches) are not outside of commerce, but they are considered as making up part of the public domain, and that they enter into commerce as soon as their destination (purpose) has ended.”

Galván then asserted that the case of the AME Church fell in line with this interpretation of the law. He had already proved that the building had entered into commerce when the government had conceded it to the AME Church because it was at that time no

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86 Galván extended this argument by citing other French legal scholars and publishers, who wrote that old churches and chapels could become private property if they are found outside of the possession of the Catholic diocese and retain their religious character. These men included Désiré Dalloz and Bélime; Edouard Dalloz and Charles Vergé, *Codes civil annoté et expliqué* (1873); and Leconte (Hector) and Cranney, *Traité théorique et pratique des actions possessories et des actions en bornage* (1875). References except for Bélime can be found in *Bibliothèque du Sénat, Auteurs et anonymes: Répertoire alphabétique* (Paris: P. Mouillot, Imprimeur du Sénat, 1905).

87 Mu-Kien A. Sang, *Ulises Heureaux*, 112.
longer part of the public domain and had become private property. The quotation that the prosecution had used thus only benefited his client, Mr. Astwood.

Misquoting Wodon, however, was not the opposition’s only mistake, but according to Galván the contesting lawyers also refused to recognize the fact that the government had granted the building in the Caartel de las Milcias exclusively to the AME Church. In essence, the prosecution denied Astwood’s version of the story. Galván set out to “prove their error” by succinctly recounting the history and argument that he presented in the Hechos. Before delving into the details, he reminded the tribunal that Protestantism consists of various denominations that adhere to their own practices and beliefs. “In each [sect] God [who is], infinitely good, infinitely wise and infinitely powerful is adored,” he wrote, but just because they worshipped the same God did not mean that Protestant denominations were identical. Galván informed that the differences between distinct protestant sects was the same as the difference between the “catholic Protestant and the Apostolic Roman Catholic.” He then once again introduced the African Methodist Episcopal denomination as one of these Protestant denominations that had been founded in the eighteenth century. Using a refrain that produced a rhythmic flow to his narration, Galván repeated his client’s version of the story:

“African Methodist Episcopalians were the Protestants who came to the country in the times of Boyer; African Methodist Episcopalians those that received the Solar, the San Francisco Convent, and lastly the Caartel de las Milcias for the divine orders for the celebration of their religious services. African Methodist Episcopalians those who received from the Dominican
government the same *Cuartel de las Milicias* after the Spanish
troops abandoned our territory…etc."

Like a sermon delivered orally, this narration continued declaring the African Methodist
Episcopal identity of the Protestants until at last Galván announced, “the temple…was
and is African Methodist Episcopal.” As in the *Hechos*, Galván then went on to blame
Goodin for the current problems in the church.

After writing the history a second time, Galván observed that he was exhausted,
and asked the tribunal to excuse him for his long defense. In conclusion, he offered a
summary of his points. First, private state property that the state donates to individuals
is not public state property. Second, the government had donated the building only to
the African Methodists Episcopalians, who had always maintained and preserved it.
Third, all modern legal scholars believe that “churches and chapels that are not found
under the orders of the Bishop of the diocese…are alienable” and thus subject to trade
and common law. Fourth, the African Methodists had always been African Methodists
up until the present moment when Goodin and his friends had created a new
denomination. Fifth and last, even if the African Methodists did not have the right that
they alleged to have, “Mr. Goodin should not have taken advantage of his role as
Assistant in the absence of the Directing Priest of the church, Mr. Astwood.” In doing so,
he had gone against the will of the AME Church, and “no one has the power to make
justice for himself in that way.” Galván stated, “Tribunals have been created
everywhere…[for the purpose of] judging and resolving juridical matters.” It was now up to the First Instance court to decide the case.

Ending his legal arguments, Galván was confident that the court would uphold the alcalde’s ruling. History had proven his case, the law had supported it, and social precedent had established the government’s practice of granting its national territory. The Dominican state would undoubtedly keep up this practice, for the government’s power and relationships with other countries and modern industry depended upon its ability to grant land and other benefits to its friends—both nationals and foreigners. As the state had granted land to national organizations as well as the local AME Church, it would continue to “transfer land in the future if a current of foreign immigration established itself in the country.” It was clear that nationality did not matter, and Galván did not need to elaborate any further on that which everyone knew to be true: the Government and not the Dominican people controlled the Nation’s public and private domains.

4.4 Conclusion

While lawyers and clients awaited the outcome of the lawsuit, news about the AME Church’s troubles in the West Indies spread among AME leaders in the United States. On November 20, 1890, Bishop Tanner reported on the events in Santo Domingo. Like Galván, Tanner blamed Goodin, who he claimed was, “inspired by Rev. Miller of St. Thomas,” and “spread the seeds of disloyalty,” among the Protestants in the
Dominican Republic.\textsuperscript{88} Reporting that the case was still in court, Tanner noted that, “already more money has been paid by Dr. Derrick to the lawyers than was paid the whole time to Mr. Goodin.”\textsuperscript{89} The situation had clearly gotten out of hand. Instead of supporting missionary work with its limited funds, the PHFMS was now forced to use its budget to defend itself abroad. The denomination now risked losing what it perceived to be its investment, property, and good name in Santo Domingo.

Yet, for Protestants living in the Dominican capital, the lawsuit meant so much more than ownership of a building or defending the moral integrity of the AME Church. The dispute was also about the right to control a narrative about black American immigration and the place of black immigrants and their descendants within Dominican society. Were the immigrants North-American Protestants or Dominican nationals? Did the government concede the property to a foreign organization or to Dominican Protestants? On the one hand, affiliation with the AME Church in the United States meant a connection to a heritage from which immigrants and their descendants had been disconnected for decades. On the other hand, asserting a Dominican nationality recognized the fixedness of American immigrant families in Santo Domingo at the same time that it challenged U.S. imperialist action in the country at large. These opposing viewpoints—which were by no means comprehensive or mutually exclusive (although

\textsuperscript{88} Bishop Benjamin Tanner Tucker, “West Indies and South America,” \textit{Christian Recorder}, November 20, 1889.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.
they were presented that way by lawyers)—demonstrate the diversity of opinions among Protestants living in Santo Domingo. They also demonstrate that control over a story really mattered in late nineteenth century Dominican Republic—and not just for the Protestants of Santo Domingo.

Both Goodin’s and Astwood’s lawyers’ arguments before the primera instancia provide the modern-day historian with a microcosmic view of larger debates taking place in Dominican society. In the lawyers’ statements to the primera instancia, contemporary questions such as the nature of private versus public property, foreign imperialism versus Dominican nationalism, and authoritarianism versus Liberalism came to the fore. The issues were not all resolved by this lawsuit, but the fact that they were openly debated reveals an experimental phase of articulating both Dominican nationalism and Dominican law during the Second Republic. Dominican lawyers creatively used law to produce results that appropriately fit Dominican realities—such as property disputes between Protestants within a Catholic country, or the defense of national rights for Dominican-born black immigrants. In the process, they worked together with their clients to interpret the law and challenge (or uphold) hegemonic ideas about Dominican nationality, state authority over Dominican territory, and the influence of the United States.
5. “Formulas and Hot Air”: Silencing the Protestant Dispute through Politics and Law

On December 11, 1890 the three Dominican judges presiding over the Protestant dispute—magistrates Alvaro Logroño, César Nicolás Penson, and Juan Bautista Matos—presented a ruling on the case. Ignoring the philosophical questions about Dominican nationality and private versus public property that the lawyers had posed, the tribunal simply concluded that Astwood and the AME Church that he represented were not, “in the present possession of the above-mentioned building.”¹ Nor were there “written [laws] or evidence that proves that he had [held possession] before.”² The judges thus annulled the mayor’s earlier ruling and stated that Goodin and his associates were the current residents of the church and should be “maintained in the building.” The tribunal then penalized Astwood, mandating that he pay all costs of the trial, including Goodin’s legal expenses.³

Although the December 11, 1890 sentence was perhaps disappointing for its lack of engagement with the trial’s long treatises on the history of African American migration to Hispaniola and Dominican property rights, it nevertheless instigated a

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¹ Demanda por apelación de sentencia, DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.34-33, Leg. 34, Exp. 33, Year 1890.  
² Ibid.  
³ The total sum was $563.50. Joubert submitted this sum to the courts on December 18, 1890 and it was approved on December 20, 1890. Expediente contra Charles Goodin por embargo, DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.35-3, Leg. 35, Exp. 3, Year 1891-1892.
political drama that lasted for the next year and a half (from January 1891 to July 1892) and touched all three branches of Dominican government: the executive branch, Congress, and the judicial branch including the Supreme Court. The various political maneuvers and legal processes that each side pursued to either protect and enact the sentence (Goodin) or see it annulled (Astwood) reveals a convoluted history of dissemblance and fabrication—“formulas and hot air” as one lawyer put it—the consequences of which are unanswered questions about the aftermath of the dispute post July 1892, and a collective forgetting that such a dispute ever occurred.4

Whereas the last chapter examined how frictions in the diasporic relationship between the Dominican Protestants and the AME Church instigated a process of historical narration and documentation, this chapter explores how frictions may also silence historical memory. At a basic level, this chapter traces Astwood’s unwillingness to comply with the December 11, 1890 sentence and Goodin’s responses to Astwood’s antics, but it also raises the question of the gap between the documentation of the conflict and the mysterious erasure of the dispute in AME written and oral historical records following the case. In doing so, this chapter begins to accounts for the silencing and eventual erasure of a two-year dispute between the AME Church and the Dominican Protestant congregation in Santo Domingo.

4 The expression, “formulas and hot air,” comes from a phrase Goodin’s lawyer used during one of the legal proceedings described in this chapter. See Demanda en nulidad de embargo inmobiliario, DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.34-10, Leg. 34, Exp. 10, Year 1891.
5.1 Phase One: The Executive and Legislative Branches

It was two days before Christmas when Astwood received the formal notice of the December 11, 1890 sentence. Undoubtedly, the notice put a damper on the holiday’s festivities. Astwood owed $551.50 pesos to the court—$500.00 alone as an honorarium to Goodin’s lawyers! This situation was not at all how Astwood had imagined things to end. Vicente Galván’s arguments before the tribunal had far outweighed those of Gibbes and Joubert, and Astwood’s esteemed social position should have given him the advantage. Or, so he had thought.

Now Astwood likely wondered if the judges were against him from the start. After all, Elijah Gross had served in the judiciary, and Goodin and his followers had provided various reference letters from prominent members of Dominican society who wrote in support of their case. Clearly the tribunal would not have ignored letters from the likes of the archbishop and former Dominican president Arturo de Meriño; the nationalist politician, Emiliano Tejera; the famed intellectual writers José G. García and Felix María Delmonte; and the politicians Eugenio de Marchena, Jacinto de Castro,

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5 This document can be found in the Supreme Court records. Expediente relativo a la apelación interpuesta por Pastor Charles Goodin 1891, DO AGN Suprema Corte de Justicia 1.1.23A-245.

6 In a technical sense, Galván’s arguments were stronger than Joubert and Gibbes. Dominican lawyer, Lic. Margarito Rodriguez Jones, made this observation upon reading both statements in August 2015; Jones has been the pastor of New Bethel I. AME Church in Santo Domingo for almost two decades.

7 Unfortunately, the letters accompanying the prosecution’s arguments were not stored with the lawsuit documents. Moreover, there is no record of what information these letters contained. We know of them because they are listed in the “List of Pieces Included,” a document dated August 14, 1890 that served as a Table of Contents for the information that Joubert and Gibbes submitted to the First Instance court. Demanda por apelación de sentencia, DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.34-33, Leg. 34, Exp. 33, Year 1890.
Pedro Valverde y Lara, Pedro T. Garrido, and others. It was now obvious to Astwood that he should not have relied on the prestige of his former title and the AME Church alone. The so-called “Protestants of Santo Domingo” had leveraged their political connections, which included a wide range of patrons. Simply put, Astwood had underestimated Goodin and his associates, and now he was paying for his mistake.

He would not repeat the error. Thinking of his own friends in government, Astwood wondered if it was too late to request a special favor. For years now, the president Ulises Heureaux had been his “confidential friend,” and as U.S. Consul Astwood had worked closely with Heureaux’s confident, Alejandro Woss y Gil, the current Minister of Public Works. With powerful friends such as these, it would not be too difficult to escalate the issue.

By the first week of January, Astwood and Galván had devised a plan to contest the tribunal’s concession to Goodin and his associates. On January 7, 1891 Galván requested that the First Instance court return Astwood’s documents. Two days later, Astwood crafted a letter to Alejandro Woss y Gil in which he petitioned the executive

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8 The other letters were written by F. Joay Machado, Pedro A. Delgado, Juan Rn Fiallo, José M. Calero.
10 Galván to Ciudadano del tribunal de primera instancia de la capital, January 7, 1890. Demanda por apelación de sentencia, DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.34-33.
branch to concede to him the title of the church property. In the letter, Astwood provided a summary of the history that he and Galván had submitted to the court, which emphasized his version of the 1824 immigration of Afro-North Americans to Santo Domingo. He also twice mentioned that “representatives of the Government, town hall, and a great number of the most renowned citizens attended the inauguration” of the new AME church building on August 24, 1884. This fact reminded Woss y Gil of the government’s former support of the AME Church and implicitly suggested that it was the executive branch’s responsibility to maintain the legitimacy of the church and its property.

Conveniently, however, Astwood left out the fact that he had recently lost the church property to the Dominican Protestants. Perhaps fearing that the executive branch would support the court’s decision if they knew about it, Astwood provided just enough detail to argue his cause. In the letter, he emphasized the fact that the title was needed in order to protect the congregation “from whatever abuse of Protestants of another sect.” Astwood also submitted a report signed by forty-three Protestant followers and a newspaper article, which supposedly recounted the recent events of the schism in the congregation from Astwood’s point of view.\(^\text{12}\) He wrote:

“A meager number of African Methodists, misadvised by an ex-Wesleyan, have broken all discipline, declaring themselves

\(^{11}\) H.C.C. Astwood to Ciudadano Ministro, January 9, 1890. *Correspondencia y oficios enviados y recibidos, 1890 a 1901*, DO AGN Obras Públicas 1.4.L7, Leg. 1101070.

\(^{12}\) This article was not found with the letter, and few newspaper records are available for the era.
independent, taking over the African Methodist Episcopal temple of this city, and hence closing its doors to the greater majority of Protestants that remain faithful to the religion of their fathers and to the obedience of their religious authorities.”

Relying on the executive branch’s ignorance of the lawsuit and Woss y Gil’s cursory knowledge of the historical Protestant group in Santo Domingo, Astwood told his side of the story uncontested. It was a story that any outsider superficially familiar with the Protestant community and unaware of the extent of the internal conflict would have easily believed.

For Astwood, this was not the first time that he had brought a legal matter to the attention of President Heureaux. The AME dispute must have reminded him of a similar lawsuit between the American capitalist Allen H. Crosby and the town hall of Santo Domingo in 1884. At that time, the Dominican government had granted Crosby the rights to build a bridge across the Ozama River. The town council, however, contested the concession and brought it to trial. Yet, a hurricane ruined the bridge before the council could have the concession annulled. Seeing the destruction, the council took immediate action and the concession was revoked. In a letter to the U.S. Secretary of State, Astwood condemned the Dominican government’s failure to protect foreign investment, and explained his role in the situation. He wrote, “Mr. Crosby applied informally to me for advice, I having no diplomatic power, could only use my personal

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13 Ibid.
influence: I called up the President and talked the matter over with him at length.” 

Astwood’s intervention, however, was ultimately ineffective. Although Crosby was allowed time to collect revenue from an alternate route across the river via ferry, the town council sued him once again. Crosby won the case in the lower court, but months later the Supreme Court ruled against him. Now facing a similar situation regarding government property concessions, Astwood hoped that his invocation of the executive branch would turn out better than in 1884.

If not, the results would be disastrous for the AME Church in Santo Domingo. Without the land grant there would be no other way to obtain a title to the property and thereby contest the First Instance ruling. If, on the other hand, the executive branch conferred the property to the AME Church, Astwood and the remaining faithful African Methodists would continue their fight against Goodin and the Dominican Protestants, and take charge of the church at the earliest opportune moment. The court had ordered that Goodin and his congregation remain in ownership of the building, but Astwood would make sure that the executive branch had the final word.

The response from the Vice President of the Dominican Republic, Manuel M. Gautier, was immediate. On January 17th, only a week and a day after receiving

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15 Crosby won in the lower court, but the town council appealed and won in the District court. Crosby then appealed to the Supreme Court and lost.
Astwood’s letter, Gautier, signed the piece of paper that verified Astwood’s version of history. The land grant, stated:

“Considering, that for a long time the African Methodist Episcopal Church have been celebrating their service in one of the accessions of the ancient quarter of Militia, rebuilt by the same sect, and inaugurated on the 24 August 1884…RESOLVED, to concede to the members of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America, resident in this city, the part of the old quarter Militia rebuilt by them to celebrate their services as they have been doing up to the present time.”16

The wording in the grant corroborated Astwood’s historical perspective. The Protestants were merely “residents,” not Dominican citizens, and the “sect” was the entity that had rebuilt the church, not Afro-North American immigrants and their descendants. As a result, the document conferred the property to an institution—the AME Church in the United States—and not to the descendants of Afro-North Americans and citizens of the Dominican Republic, Protestants who had lived on the island since 1824. This result was exactly what Astwood had hoped!

On Tuesday, February 10, 1891, Astwood sat down in his Santo Domingo home to write Bishop John M. Brown in New Jersey. More than a friend and mentor, Brown was the bishop who ordained Astwood an AME elder in 1883, and for this reason

16 The original grant can be found in Correspondencia y oficios enviados y recibidos, 1890a 1901, DO AGN Obras Públicas I.4.L7, Leg. 1101070. Astwood translated the document, and his translation was printed in the Christian Recorder in May 1891. “Forwarded and Commented On D.C.I.,” Christian Recorder, May 21, 1891.
Astwood credited Brown as “founder” of the work in Santo Domingo.17 “I know you are naturally interested in the outcome of the bitter controversy unjustly carried on by Mr. Goodin against our church here,” Astwood wrote, anxious to share the good news.

“After a bitter and vexatious controversy for nine months, God has crowned our efforts with victory.” With the title granted from the Dominican government in hand, the property was secured for the AME Church, and Astwood and his followers planned to retake possession of the building the upcoming Saturday. Enclosing a translation of the title for Brown’s perusal, Astwood concluded the letter with a popular adage, “The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, but unto him that endureth to the end.”18 He could not have anticipated the irony of his words.

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Celebration among the Protestants of Santo Domingo was short lived. It seemed that almost as soon as they had won the appeal, they had somehow lost rights to the property again. By early February, the news was out. Astwood had acquired a title to the church property from the Ministry of Public Works. Goodin and his congregation were dumbfounded. How could the government change its mind so quickly—betraying its Protestant citizens to the North American intruder? More immediately, what could they do in the face of the land grant? It was clear to Goodin and the Santo Domingo

18 This adage is not found in the Bible, but it is derived from a combination of two Bible verses, Ecclesiastes 9:11 and Matthew 24:13.

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Protestants that Astwood may have obtained the land grant as a personal favor. Astwood had never shied away from asserting his political influence when possible. Had the executive branch violated judiciary power in order to appease Astwood? If so, it seemed that there was little they could do to reverse the concession.

Thinking through their options, Goodin and the other Protestant church leaders ultimately decided to contest the property title, but they would do so while seeming to comply with the executive branch’s concession. Handing over the keys of the building to Astwood, they appeared non-antagonistic as if they were trying to work with Astwood to find a solution. As the African Methodist Episcopal members repossessed the church, however, the Dominican Protestants geared up for another battle.19 Meanwhile Alejandro Gross set out to inquire about the exact meaning and purpose of the land grant.

On February 6, 1891, Gross wrote to the Ministry of Justice and Public Instruction, the branch of government responsible for the administrative matters of the judicial branch and the department formerly in charge of land grants (1880-1887).20 In the letter, Gross spoke out against the title recently given to Astwood and presented his

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19 Exactly how and under what terms Astwood came into possession of the property is unknown. As described below, subsequent lawsuits between Goodin and Astwood during July 1891-1892, reveal that Goodin allowed Astwood back into the property and gave him the keys to the building in February 1891. There was no legal process for this transfer of property.

20 The Ministry of Justice and Public Education’s function was largely dedicated to public education. Between 1880 and 1887 it was also responsible for governmental land grants. Guía de los fondos el archivo general de la nación (Santo Domingo: Archivo General de la Nación, 2012) 159, 181.
arguments for why it should be revoked. Just as Astwood’s petition to the Ministry of Public Works asserted Astwood’s historical perspective, Gross’s letter recounted the Dominican Protestants’ version of history. The black migrants had come from the United States in May of 1824 during the time of Boyer and had acquired the building in the Cuartel de las Milicias in 1828. Although they were first Haitian citizens, they became Dominican citizens in 1844 when the Dominican Republic declared independence. As Dominicans, they had “gladly adhered to the national cause, offering their services as Dominican citizens—they and their sons—in the Army, the Marines, and civil work.”

As Dominican citizens, the Protestants had also kept possession of the church building until the Spanish annexed the country in 1861. Regaining the property in 1866, the Dominican Protestants had enjoyed fifty-eight years of peaceful existence (1828-1844, 1844-1861, and 1866-1891) in the Cuartel de las Milicias until the present dispute with Astwood.

Gross explained the current circumstances, emphasizing that it gave him great sorry to bring this matter forward. The dispute had begun as an internal disagreement in the church, “that should not have passed from the grounds of the temple.” Yet, because of Astwood’s “absolutism” and “perseverance,” a “private matter, purely of spiritual jurisdiction in the Methodist sect” had become a “publicity scandal before the courts.”

21 Correspondencia, oficios y circulares 1889-1891, DO AGN Justicia e Instrucción Pública 1.2.L56, Leg. 304363.
22 Ibid.
Gross explained that the “The immigrants [of 1824], Methodist Episcopalians in the majority, were outside of the spiritual jurisdiction of the United States of North America when they established their chapels [in Hispaniola].” Instead of communing with African Methodists from the United States in the 1820s, the first Methodist immigrants had celebrated their conferences in Haiti until Dominican independence in 1844. It was not until after Astwood’s arrival in 1882 that the spiritual tie to the AME Church in the United States was established. Under Elias R. Gross, the “head of the Methodist sect of this city,” Astwood had “proposed and negotiated the union to the spiritual jurisdiction of the Missionary Center of the United States.” He had also “offered with energy and activity, great and important services,” such as the reconstruction of the temple, which many Dominican citizens had supported. Yet, as Gross insisted, Astwood’s activity in the church did not mean that the Dominican Protestants had transferred property rights to the AME denomination in the United States. Astwood’s “service was voluntary and spontaneous without obligation of transferring rights,” and he thus had no right to expropriate the Dominican Protestants’ property. The Dominican Protestants furthermore maintained the right to terminate the spiritual relationship with the United

\[23\] Gross explained that they met in Haiti with Rev. Isaac Miller of Samaná as their representative.
States at any point in time.\textsuperscript{24} Yet, when they did just that in 1890, Astwood had sued them.

Although Gross did not explicitly discuss why the Dominican Protestants decided to terminate the relationship with the AME Church in the United States, he candidly objected to the church’s racial politics. From his perspective, the fact that the AME Church was a black church for the Negro race made it unsuitable for the Dominican Republic. “The name \textit{African} does not have a reason for existence in this country,” wrote Gross. He argued:

“That name implies a distinction of exclusivism contrary to good harmony and equality. Imagination is clouded before this idea and modern civilization condemns it. In a country like ours whose population is heterogeneous, we should move away from all social designations that could create stigma of discord.”\textsuperscript{25}

According to Gross, the AME Church should not even exist in the United States “since those who were beforehand considered \textit{things} are today citizens with civil and political rights.” Considering that slavery had ended over two decades ago in the United States, Gross believed that a race-based church could only foster contention. Gross thus petitioned the government to provide a counter grant made out to the “Protestant

\textsuperscript{24} According to Gross, the fact that courts had been involved at all was disgraceful since the congregation’s decision to come “under the auspices of the Church of the U.S. is a matter of pure and simple spiritual jurisdiction…that could be ended, just as it was ended by the Dominican Protestants’ will [in 1890].” Ibid.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
Methodist Episcopal Church of Santo Domingo,” thus “completely removing the word African [since the use of it is] antisocial in a country as free as ours.”

While Gross’s rejection of the church’s name and racial politics must have resonated with the Minister of Justice and other Dominican officials who were attuned to contemporary Dominican intellectuals’ discourse on race, his statement was ironic for at least two reasons. First, it betrayed the sentiments of his ancestors who had joined the AME Church and ultimately fled the U.S. because of racial discrimination. Second, Gross’s rejection of the black church repeated Astwood’s proposal to remove “African” from the title of the church—a proposal that Astwood had presented to the AME Church in the United States only a few years prior. It is therefore difficult to determine whether Gross truly believed his own words. While his statement may indicate an important distinction between first and second-generation black immigrants, it could be that Gross’s words were merely a way for him to gain his audience’s support. By portraying the AME Church as an institution that imposed a foreign, supposedly racist ideology, Gross aligned himself with Dominican liberal philosophy and thus asserted his own place within the nation. The tenor of Gross’s letter was thus reminiscent of a countrymen’s cry for unity against a black foreigner; the specter of Haiti loomed large.

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26 Ibid.
The racial politics of the AME Church, however, was not the principle issue at hand. The more immediate problem—and perhaps the most logical line of argumentation—concerned the legality of the executive branch’s land grant. Gross turned to articles 2219 and 2262 of the Civil Code, which stated that after a period of thirty years a person could obtain the property on which they had lived. He then reminded the government that already by 1861 the Dominican Protestants had held possession of the building for thirty-three years. Gross next informed the executive branch of the First Instance tribunal’s December 11, 1890 sentence. This ruling (which he claimed was founded on the very Civil Code articles that he had cited) was irrevocable and thus served as an indisputable title to the property since Dominican judicial courts had the power to determine property disputes independent of the executive branch.

Last, Gross invoked the Dominican Constitution. “The Constitution of this Republic,” he wrote, “guarantees property and the Government should guarantee it and only expropriate it for public utility, which does not exist in this case.”

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28 Art. 2219 states, “La prescripción es un medio de adquirir o de extinguir una obligación, por el trascurso de cierto tiempo, y bajo las condiciones que determina la ley.” Art. 2262 says, “Todas las acciones, tanto reales como personales, se prescriben por treinta años, sin que esté obligado el que alega esta prescripción a presentar ningún título, ni que pueda oponérsele la excepción que se deduce de la mala fe.” Código civil de la República Dominicana: Arreglado por la comisión nombrada por el poder ejecutivo y conforme al decreto del Congreso nacional de fecha 4 de julio, conservando el orden de los artículos del texto Frances Vigente en la Republica desde el año de 1845 (Santo Domingo: Imprenta de García Hermanos, 1883), 495, 502.

29 The ruling was indeed a title insofar as it was a legal document produced by a judicial ruling that could not be appealed.

30 Correspondencia, oficios y circulares 1889-1891, DO AGN Justicia e Instrucción Pública 1.2.L56, Leg. 304363.
arguments clearly indicated that the executive branch’s land grant to Astwood was not only unjust but also illegal. Gross thus implored the government to revoke it.

Gross waited nearly two weeks before receiving a response from the Minister of Justice and Public Instruction. Dated February 19th, the letter from minister Tomás Morales was short and left much to be desired. Morales had notified the executive power (presumably President Heareaux) of Gross’s contestation of the land grant. The executive power, in turn, had stated that:

“The concession granted to the parishioners of the African Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States in this city, is not of personal nature, therefore whichever individuals that in whatever time and circumstances represent the moral entity called church, will have the right to use the building that has been granted to them.\(^{31}\)

From Gross’s point of view, the letter offered less than what he had expected. The minister’s response did not put to rest the dispute between Astwood and the Dominican Protestants, and the question of who exactly could use the church was ambiguous. Did the government truly mean to say that any congregation that claimed to be a church could use the building? Despite this vagueness, the reply still left some reason for hope. If Heureaux had not usurped the First Instance court’s ruling as a special favor to Astwood, perhaps the Dominican Protestants had a chance to reclaim the property after

\(^{31}\) This letter can be found among the Supreme Court records. Expediente relativo a la apelación interpuesta por pastor Charles Goodin, DO AGN, Suprema Corte de Justicia 1.1.23A-245, January 23, 1891-October 9, 1891.
all. Upon reading the letter from the Ministry of Justice and Public Instruction, Gross likely hurried to share the news with Goodin and the rest of the board members of the Methodist Church of Santo Domingo.

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As per custom, the first session of the Dominican National Congress in 1891 took place on Dominican Independence Day, February 27th. The following Wednesday, during the third session, Congress received notice of a letter that had passed through the executive branch that President Heureaux had ordered to be read at Congress. After some controversy about procedures, one of the representatives read the letter in which various members of the Protestant community in the capital raised grievances because of a grant given to the AME Church. The letter was then passed to Congress’s Public Works Committee, which was to discuss the matter and report back to Congress with a proposed resolution.

Days later, the committee returned with a response. After deliberations, they had determined that the land grant to the AME Church was unlawful and should be revoked. This resolution provoked some controversy. Representative Natalio Redondo

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32 See Libro copiadores de actas de sesiones 1890-1891, DO AGN, Poder Legislativo. 1.3.L33, Lib. 102706.
33 Representative José E. Santelises disapproved of reading the letter since it disrupted the order of the business session. Congress then voted and ultimately resolved to read the letter. This action allowed Congress to not break with the chamber’s internal rules of order. Ibid.
34 The committee’s report was read on March 6th, and the discussion took place on March 9th.
35 For Congress’s discussion, see Libro copiadores de actas de sesiones 1890-1891, DO AGN, Poder Legislativo. 1.3.L33, Lib. 102706.
was the first to speak. He agreed with the committee’s report. “I will not begin to discuss Mr. Astwood’s rights, [a discussion that] is disconnected from this Chamber. The matter is about things judged and therefore the Executive branch did not do well to grant the concession of that building.” Representative Luis Francisco del Castillo agreed, while Representative J. M. Molina tried to clarify the matter. “The accusation against the Executive Branch should happen by knowing more or less the exact matter. I suppose then that the Executive branch was caught off-guard.” Representatives Luis A. Bermudez, Castillo, and Redondo agreed that the Executive Branch had been “surprised” (sorprendido). Molina then clarified. “We have to discuss two points, whether the Executive Branch knew of the sentence, and whether it could grant the concession.” Bermudez, the president of the Public Works Committee, disagreed. “The debatable point is the committee’s report, and whether the Executive Branch has the power to destroy the effects of a non-appealable sentence.” Others piped in—questioning whether the grant was lawful and reiterating that the Executive Branch must not have known about the sentence. Then Representative Rodríguez Objio reminded the Legislative Branch that, “we are discussing a [committee] report and it is to that which we should limit ourselves.” The president of Congress, Dr. Pedro M. Garrido, then submitted the question to vote, and the Legislative Branch voted to annul the concession in agreement with the Public Works Committee and Representative
Bermudez, who would present the resolution at the next legislative session on March 11th. 36

Before the formal presentation was made, Astwood learned of the results of the March 9th discussion and wrote urgently to Woss y Gil. 37 In his letter, Astwood informed the Minister of Public Works of the First Instance court ruling and answered the implicit question of why he had omitted the information about the lawsuit in the first place. Congress, according to Astwood, was “taking as definite a preliminary sentence that does not resolve anything in depth.” In his interpretation of the December 11th sentence, Astwood claimed that the court had only ruled in the possessory, and he reminded the Minister that, “in a legal process, one can not debate the possessory along with the petitionary.” 38 The sentence gave Goodin and his associates the building—which they occupied by de facto and not de jure power—until either party could legally prove rightful ownership. Astwood then explained to Woss y Gil that in order to prove rightful ownership, he wrote to the Executive Branch in the name of his representatives (the AME Church) and requested the title that he had neglected to obtain years ago when Woss y Gil had given him permission to build the Protestant church in one of the annexes of the military barracks. Once he obtained the title, Astwood claimed that he

36 Ibid.
37 H.C.C. Astwood to Ciudadano Ministro, March 10, 1891. Correspondencia y oficios enviados y recibidos, 1890 a 1901. DO AGN Obras Públicas. 1.4.L7, Leg. 1101070.
38 It appears that Astwood either misinterpreted the sentence or deliberately was misleading Woss y Gil. The December 11, 1890 sentence could not be repealed since it was a last-action lawsuit.
sued his adversaries on the basis of the petitionary, and they, “not having title nor valid reasons before court, at seeing themselves sued in the petitionary, asked for a settlement and handed over the temple that they had taken over.” Ending his letter, Astwood asked Woss y Gill to intercede on behalf of the AME Church before Congress, which he accused of committing, “an act of notable injustice.” He believed that the Legislative Branch would change its decision if it had further information from the Executive Branch, and it would not, “insist on maintaining a resolution that law and justice does not justify and that, in my opinion…is so offensive.” In this way, Astwood vindicated his original request for the title, petitioned the Executive Branch for additional support, and disabused Woss y Gil of any suspicions of Astwood committing fraud against the government.

Despite Astwood’s proactive letter, there was nothing that Woss y Gil could do until the Congress had announced its decision. Congress’s ruling on the Methodist debacle was voted and approved three days later on March 13. As Astwood suspected, it ruled in favor of Goodin and his followers. Among the considerations that Congress made, the resolution stated that Goodin had the right to the property and the title. The representatives also made the point that they did not have the power to judge as a
judiciary tribunal, but that it was the “responsibility [of Congress] to not permit that the rulings of a competent tribunal be ineffective.” Since the executive branch’s title would destroy the ruling of the First Instance court, Congress could not support it. Thus, Congress resolved to annul the January 17th concession, and sent notice of the decision to Woss y Gil on March 16th.

Upon receipt of the notice, Woss y Gil wrote immediately to the Legislative Branch and requested an audience to present further information to Congress. His letter, which was read on March 17th and subsequently handed over to the Public Works Committee, indicated the executive branch’s support of Astwood. The letter must have alarmed some of the representatives, for in the resolution that the committee presented the next day Bermudez made clear that Woss y Gil could not comment on Congress’s March 13 resolution. “We can not refuse that civil servant his attendance in the Chamber,” Bermudez stated, “but he would not be able to submit verbal opinions made in name of the Executive as observations regarding the resolution dictated by the National Congress.” Instead, Woss y Gil could only talk about the supplemental information that he wished to add. Representatives Castellanos, Castillo, and Manuel de

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41 Ibid.
42 For the notice sent to Woss y Gil see: Libros copiadores de oficios 1890-1896, DO AGN Poder Legislativo. 1.18.L34, Lib. 102709.
43 For Woss y Gil’s letter see: Libro copiadores de actas de sesiones 1890-1891, DO AGN, Poder Legislativo. 1.3.L33, Lib. 102706.
S. Rodriguez supported this resolution, and it received a unanimous vote. The next day, the head of Congress, Pedro María Garrido, wrote to Woss y Gil to invite him to the Chamber of Congress under the aforementioned conditions and in accordance with the law.

The Minister of Public Works appeared before Congress two days later, and submitted a written report with eleven observations made on behalf of Astwood and the AME Church. The beginning of the report clearly stated that the black immigrants from the United States had been part of the African Methodist church ever since their arrival in 1824. “The Protestant sect resident in this city is called ‘African Methodist Episcopal of the United States,’ and various documents prove this, including the declarations of the members of the same sect,” Woss y Gil wrote. He also claimed that the AME Church in Santo Domingo had never changed its name or allegiance. The Executive Branch thus was aware of what it was doing in providing Astwood the land grant since, “it had in mind the name of the buildings’ concessionary group ever since Protestant religious services were set up in this city.” For this reason, Woss y Gil was making further observations; the executive branch had not made a mistake.

Woss y Gil next addressed the donation that the executive branch had given to the AME Church in 1884, when it had permitted the congregation to reconstruct the

45 Libro copiadores de actas de sesiones 1890-1891, DO AGN, Poder Legislativo. 1.3.L33, Lib. 102706.
church building. Woss y Gil stated that the reconstruction of the church was “not for the exercise of all Protestant services, but exclusively for the services of the aforementioned denomination, the only sect that existed back then.” At that time, the members of the AME Church had the right to petition the government for a title to the building. The fact that a “schismatic minority” had broken away from the denomination to form their own religion did not void the right that the AME Church had to the property in 1884. The African Methodists, “can not lose that same right because of the simple fact that they did not ask [for the title] earlier,” Woss y Gil wrote. It was in recognition of this right that the executive branch had submitted the land grant to Astwood in the name of the AME Church. According to Woss y Gil, if the executive branch had not acted, “it would have proceeded unfairly in discrimination of those who it had formerly conceded a right.” In essence, the executive branch would have contradicted itself.

Regarding the obvious contradiction between the First Instance sentence in favor of the Dominican Protestants and the executive branch’s subsequent concession to the AME Church, Woss y Gil reproduced Astwood’s explanation: “The sentence of the first instance tribunal is definitive only in the possessory (lo posesorio) and therefore the lawsuit is not over.” According to Woss y Gil, the court had provided a way for “the other part to make a petitionary claim in order to reclaim its unfairly interrupted rights.” In cooperation with the law, Astwood had requested the land grant from the executive branch. This action was legal since “there is no law that forbids a determined party in a
trial to solicit at any time—and from the person who makes the donation—the title for which they have given them right.” Considering this information, Woss y Gil attempted to clarify the executive branch’s actions. The presidency “has not tried to interrupt the…administration of justice, but help it declare in its ruling the true right.” Woss y Gil stated that the tribunal should have conserved its final judgment until further proof of ownership was made available, as the executive branch had attempted to do through its land grant to the AME Church.

In his last few remarks, Woss y Gil repudiated the Dominicans Protestants’ nationalist claims, and indicated Gross’s ulterior motives in attempting to claim the property. According to Woss y Gil, the “name of this sect has nothing to do with the nationality of its members because an individual’s political rights are regulated by other laws that are not subordinate to the classifications of a religious group.” Indeed, the majority of Dominican Protestants, “the Dominican descendants of the old 1824 immigrants,” were in fact members of the AME Church under Astwood’s leadership. Woss y Gil warned Congress that, “those that are with Mr. Goodin, under the name of a new sect created by him are—except for Hamilton and two or three more individuals—foreign to the old [AME Church] and newly arrived.” These individuals had joined the church “without intention to harm or favor either side.” Gross, however, had elaborated a nationalist discourse in order to argue his side of the case and obtain the property and charge of the congregation that his father had once led. “It is erroneous to believe that
because Reverend Elias Gross was pastor of [AME Church] until his death…the Protestant temple could pass like an inheritance and transmit from fathers to sons.” This was against the laws of the AME Church, and would harm the rights of all of Dominican Protestants whose parents had worshiped in the church since the 1820s and to whom the government had granted the newly constructed temple in 1884. With these final thoughts, Woss y Gil invited Congress to reconsider the resolution it had passed.46

It took over three weeks for Congress to deliberate on Woss y Gil’s well-articulated arguments in favor of the AME Church. On April 1st, Bermudez read Woss y Gil’s report again before Congress, and on April 13th the committee presented its resolution to maintain its original decision.47 Deliberations followed. This time there was no confusion about the Executive Branch’s opinion on the situation, although some representatives expressed uncertainty about the facts of the dispute. Representative Santilise, for example, asked to see the documents associated with controversy, but Bermudez refused. “This discussion has been planned for seven days and we can not disrupt order. Representative Santelise knew this circumstance and could have gone to the Secretary in order to familiarize himself with the documents,” he stated.48 The Chamber then continued its discussion of the dispute.

46 Ibid.
47 Libro copiadores de actas de sesiones 1890-1891, DO AGN, Poder Legislativo. 1.3.L33, Lib. 102706.
48 Ibid.
Attempting to summarize the events for Santilise and others, Representative Zorilla presented his partially misconstrued rendition of the facts.\footnote{Zorilla introduced the conflict with the words: “The Minister of Justice, at finding out about the division between [the Protestants], wanted to reconcile the above groupings. And not being able to do this, he ignored them so that they could go to the Courts of Justice.” Although no other remaining document corroborates the alleged early involvement of the Minister of Justice, beginning the story at this point did not distort the main issue at hand. Ibid.} Zorilla explained that the First Instance court ruled in favor of the “Protestants that call themselves Dominicans” on December 11, 1890. The ruling was a “last appeal possessory sentence” (último recurso), and therefore could not be appealed. Zorilla continued, “After this Mr. Astwood in the name of the American Protestants asked for the concession of the property where the [Protestant] building stands.” In this way, Zorilla correctly described Astwood’s petition, but he then misinterpreted the Executive Branch’s response. “The Executive Branch did not give [Astwood] what they were asking for, it only gave to the parishioners of the [AME Church] the part of the old Cuartel de Milicias built by them.” This slight variation of the facts recognized that the Executive Branch had mishandled the situation, but it also gave it the benefit of doubt by characterizing its mistake as a misunderstanding in its communication with Astwood. If the Executive Branch had only conceded the land [solar] and not specified the building, perhaps they would not be in this situation. In conclusion, Zorilla stated that the Executive Branch had violated the First Instance court’s ruling when it conceded the property to Astwood. “The Executive Power can say that it has failed, since it has exercised faculties that do
not correspond to it according to the Constitution, since it should have supposed that both parties beforehand had titles to declare at trial,” he wrote.\(^{50}\) He then rejected Woss y Gil’s observations, accepted the committee’s resolution, and stated that the two parties should pursue the dispute in court without the Executive Branch’s title.

With this explanation before the chamber, Congress reconsidered and discussed the various perspectives of the dispute. Woss y Gil’s observations were reread, and Bermudez once again presented the committee’s proposed resolution in order to clarify its decision. Representative Castillo spoke up in favor of the committee, but others disagreed. Representative Molina, for example, argued in favor of the presidency. Representative Pichardo did the same, but only after requesting yet another clarification of the events, which Bermudez provided. Last, Representative Jiménez sided with the opposition, “for the reasons that representatives Molina and Pichardo raised.” Still, despite the fact that three congressmen favored Woss y Gil’s report, their arguments were not enough to change the majority opinion. After deliberations, a vote was taken and Congress sustained its March 13\(^{th}\) decision; a notice was sent to Woss y Gil on April 15\(^{th}\).\(^{51}\)

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\(^{50}\) Ibid.

\(^{51}\) García Godoy to Mtro, April 15, 1891. Oficios y correspondencia 1890-1891, DO AGN Poder Legislativo. 1.9.LC819. Leg, 207723.
About two weeks later on April 27th, Congress received another correspondence about the dispute.\(^{52}\) This time the letter came from the Protestants of Santo Domingo, who now asked Congress for the title to the property based on its March 13\(^{th}\) ruling. Congress, however, never responded to this communication, and only a sentence in the congressional minutes evidences that the letter ever existed.\(^{53}\) The controversy, as Zorilla had ordered, would have to be solved in court—without Astwood’s concession from the Executive Branch, and without further support for the Dominican Protestants from Congress.

**5.2 Phase Two: The Return to Court**

By May 1891, poor communication about the property dispute demonstrated both the Executive Branch’s delay in complying with the National Congress and the AME Church’s lack of information about events in Santo Domingo. On May 11\(^{th}\), the president of the National Congress, Fernando F. García Godoy, wrote to the Minster of Public Works to request that the Executive Power publish Congress’s resolution in the Official Gazette. It had been a month since Congress had notified the Executive branch of its final decision, yet the executive branch had not “deigned” to perform “its corresponding duties.”\(^{54}\) At the same time, miles away in the United States, news of

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\(^{52}\) *Libro copiadores de actas de sesiones 1890-1891*, DO AGN, Poder Legislativo. 1.3.L33, Lib. 102706.

\(^{53}\) The letter was read at Congress, but there is no record that Congress ever responded.

\(^{54}\) Garcia Godoy to Mtro, April 15, 1891. *Oficios y correspondencia 1890-1891*, DO AGN Poder Legislativo. 1.9.LC819. Leg. 207723.
Astwood’s success in “settling” the property issue in the Dominican Republic was published in the *Christian Recorder*. “To me the news is cheering,” wrote Bishop Brown, unaware that the land grant had recently been revoked. Brown continued, “The next thing to do is to build a first-class church in the city of San Domingo.” Entirely removed from the situation in the capital, Brown romanticized the image of a large chapel in, “a republic controlled by the Negro.” He thus called for African Methodists across the nation to make free will pledges to buy an iron frame and establish in Santo Domingo an even bigger structure than the AME edifice in Haiti.

While faulty communication in Santo Domingo and United States abounded, the Protestants of the city prepared themselves for another court battle. On June 12, 1891, a letter from the administrative board of the Protestant Church in Santo Domingo was read before Congress. The letter asked for clarification of a resolution passed over two years prior on May 13, 1889, which stated that anyone that has constructed a building on property belonging to the state could obtain the property in the name of the lease holder. The latter stated, “Even though the word “edificar” means to construct a building, raising it from the foundation, the undersigned desire...that the

56 Brown compared Santo Domingo to Port-au-Prince, where the AME Church in the United States had bought and shipped a frame from London for $16,000. Ibid. This amount was more than was reported previously. See the second and third chapters of this dissertation.
57 Ibid.
Congress...define in a more amplified sense the word “edificar.” The Protestants would then use this definition to defend their rights before the Dominican court. Almost two weeks later, on June 23, 1891, the board received a response. “The Chamber in today’s session has resolved that...‘edificar’ means ‘to raise a building,’ which is the true expression of the word,” the letter from Congress stated. Thus, those who desired to use this particular law for their defense would interpret edificar in this way. Keeping this information at hand, the church board planned its next move.

Meanwhile the pressure to comply with the December 11, 1890 sentence fell heavily upon Astwood. Despite Congress’s decision to annual the Executive Branch’s land grant, by July he still had not handed over the property to Goodin and the Dominican Protestants, nor had he paid the $551.50 pesos in court fees. Astwood knew that it was only a matter of time before Goodin and his followers would take action against him. Thus, he was likely not surprised when the sheriff of Santo Domingo’s First Instance Court, Jesús Antonio de Bonilla, visited him once again on July 21, 1891 and served him a notice from Goodin who demanded the payment of the debt due to the court. If the debt was not paid, Goodin threatened to embargo the AME Church’s property in the city, which consisted of a building that Astwood had bought in the name of...

58 Oficios y correspondencia 1890-1891, DO AGN Poder Legislativo. 1.9.LC819. Leg. 207723.
59 Ibid. See also: Expediente Relativo a la Apelación Interpuesta por Pastor Charles Goodin, DO AGN, Suprema Corte de Justicia 1.1.23A-245, January 23, 1891-October 9, 1891.
60 For this document see: Demanda en nulidad de embargo inmobiliario, DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.34-10, Leg. 34, Exp. 10, Year 1891.
of the AME Foreign Missionary Society in 1888 (i.e. not the temple in the Caurtel de las Milicias).  

Upon receipt of this notice, Astwood wrote immediately to the AME Missionary Secretary, Rev. Tanner, in the United States. “As I told you that I anticipated trouble if the cost of the lawsuit was not paid. Well, it has begun,” he stated. His letter reported the recent events:

“I was notified yesterday that if within thirty days these costs are not paid, the property of the AME Church will be embargoed and sold out for the payment of about eight hundred Mexican dollars which would be about $640 gold, more or less.”

Situated on the hill of San Francisco, the property in question was located in a prominent place in the capital city and was surrounded by two principle streets: Consistorial Street in the east and San Francisco street in the south. The alley also known as San Francisco flanked its western side, and north of the building was another house owned by Mr. Gervacio Alvarez. This central location made the property worth about “three or four thousand dollars.” Astwood noted that to have the building “sacrificed for [only $640], to say nothing of the discredit of the church, is simply abominable.”

Confronted with the total loss of the AME Church’s property in the Dominican Republic

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61 For the bill of sale see: Expediente contra Charles Goodin por embargo, DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.35-3, Leg. 35. Exp. 3, Year 1891-1892.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
and further public disgrace, Astwood believed there was no other solution other than to pay the court fees. He asked Tanner to cable the money immediately upon receipt of the letter.

Astwood’s effort to procure help from abroad, however, was not enough to halt the course of events. While Astwood waited for Tanner’s response, the dispute with Goodin escalated. On July 25, 1891, de Bonilla returned to Astwood’s home and served him with another notice from Goodin. 66 This time, Goodin demanded that Astwood abandon the church building in the Caurtel de las Milicias and all of its effects within forty-eight hours. If Astwood did not comply, Goodin would sue him “using all possible legal means and would make him responsible for the damages that the delay caused.” This was not good news for Astwood and the AME Church. From a legal perspective, Astwood’s noncompliance with the First Instance court’s ruling clearly set him on the wrong side of justice. It seemed as if Astwood was facing a hopeless fight, and he wondered if it was possible to salvage the AME church and its property; if so, he had only forty-eight hours to figure it out and devise a plan.

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On July 27th, de Bonilla walked to Goodin’s home on San José Street to convey a rather strange message to Goodin on behalf of Astwood. To Charles Goodin, “who says

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66 For this document see: Expediente Relativo a la Apelación Interpuesta por Pastor Charles Goodin, DO AGN, Suprema Corte de Justicia 1.1.23A-245, January 23, 1891-October 9, 1891.
he is the Pastor of the Protestant Church of this city,” de Bonilla declared that Astwood “no longer has the position of representative of the African Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States of North America.”\textsuperscript{67} According to Astwood, he had quit this position and his resignation had been accepted in the United States. In his stead, the church board now represented the AME denomination. Since Astwood was not a part of this board, “he had nothing to do with the claim that Sr. Goodin made… [on] the twenty-fifth of the current month.”\textsuperscript{68} This was a surprising turn of events. It seemed as if Astwood had made a desperate attempt to disassociate himself from the AME church in order to avoid another lawsuit after he formerly insisted that he was the “only boss” of the Protestant Church. What would Goodin say? Unfortunately, de Bonilla was unable to witness the look on Goodin’s face when he heard the news. When he arrived at Goodin’s house, he found it closed and the pastor absent. De Bonilla thus left notice with Goodin’s neighbor, Domingo Moreno.

This was not the last time that Domingo Moreno would see de Bonilla that day. Only a few hours later, de Bonilla was back at Moreno’s door with two additional messages from Astwood. The first notice indicated that Astwood had rethought his strategy since it annulled his previous statement. He was indeed the representative of the AME Church in Santo Domingo! This new development was an embarrassment to

\textsuperscript{67} This notice is among the Supreme Court Records. Ibid.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.
both Astwood and de Bonilla, since de Bonilla claimed that he had misunderstood Astwood’s instructions and thus took the blame. The second message summoned Goodin to court. Astwood had requested a short-term trial in order to expedite the process. The president of the First Instance court, Cesar Nicolas Penson, had granted the hearing and set the date for July 29th. At the trial, Astwood’s would not only challenge Goodin’s demand for Astwood to abandon the building, but would also insist that Goodin pay the court costs and an additional indemnity because of the January 25th notice he sent to Astwood, which Astwood declared “arbitrary and void.”

The fact that Astwood took the matter once again to court even though his previous scheme (the land grant) had not succeeded at the National Congress seems strange, but the terms that Astwood presented offer further insight. Apparently, Astwood maintained the same story that he had offered to Woss y Gil. “The sentence dictated on December 11, 1890 does not stipulate that Mr. Goodin be reinstated in the status that he held and occupy the building,” the summons read. In fact, Astwood claimed that the December sentence had no effect, “since the resolution to maintain Sr. Goodin and his associates in the building, [became void] once they had renounced the possession without reservations and had handed over the building to the applicant

69 The second notice is also among the Supreme Court Records. Ibid.
70 The summons can be found among the Supreme Court Records. Ibid.
71 Ibid.
These were sly tactics based on the technicality of the word “return” (reintegrar) versus “maintain,” and the fact that the Protestants of Santo Domingo had indeed released the building to Astwood in February. They had done so, however, only after Astwood had obtained a land grant from the executive branch, which they subsequently fought. Astwood claimed that in trying to repossess the building, Goodin was attempting “to modify or distort the mechanisms of a sentence.” Yet, was it not Astwood who was also doing the same? Perhaps his strategy was worth the risk. If Astwood could persuade the court to reconsider and overturn the December 1890 decision, Goodin would have no further basis to pursue his claim over the building.

On the day of the hearing, Goodin’s new lawyers Rafael J. Castillo and Jesus M. Peña responded to Astwood’s accusations. In their opinion, the law had not been distorted. “Mr. Goodin has done nothing more than exercise one of the manifestations of the right of possession that the sentence recognizes,” they explained. The December sentence could not have explicitly said, “return,” because at that time Goodin was in possession of the building. Since the December 11, 1890 sentence was given as a final ruling, it was evidence that Goodin and the Dominican Protestants were the true owners.

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72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
74 On July 27, 1891, Astwood and Goodin, along with their new sets of lawyers, met on the second floor of #9 St. Thomas Street; Astwood’s lawyer was José Melinton Fernández. See: Demanda contra la Iglesia Protestante de Santo Domingo, DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.34-08, Leg. 34, Exp. 8, Year 1891.
75 Ibid.
of the building. Goodin thus had the right to ask Astwood to leave. The lawyers highlighted Astwood’s own inconsistency. “Astwood believes that because he occupies [the building], Mr. Goodin can not exercise his right of possession. The representative of the AMEC...did not think that way when on June 10th, 1890, he called Sr. Goodin for a hearing before the mayor of this capital,” they wrote.76 At that time, the tables were reversed. Goodin occupied the building and Astwood believed himself to be the possessor. Astwood demanded that Goodin abandon the building in the same way that Goodin now demanded Astwood to leave. According to the lawyers, the only difference between the two situations was that the December 11, 1890 sentence granted Goodin and his associates the exclusive right to the building. “What would it value to triumph in a land possession lawsuit if the loosing party...had the ability to effectively block the legitimate possessor from occupying [the building]?” the lawyers asked.77 The law was clearly on Goodin’s side, for he had only sought to exercise his rights.

In Castillo and Peña’s opinion, this latest hearing was just further proof that Astwood was once again dissembling the facts for his own gain. Castillo and Peña continued to explain that Goodin had never given up the possession of the building. Such an act would require an official transaction, with appropriate compensation, as described in Article 2044 of the Civil Code. They stated, “It would be logical to suppose

76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
all of this [happened], but it is false.” No transaction had occurred and there was no record of Astwood’s supposed ownership of the building. “Speaking purely Magistrates, this lawsuit is nothing more than a possession prohibition disguised,” they stated. In other words, Astwood—who had no right by law to the property—was trying to gain power over it by taking advantage of “a tribunal that does not know the initial conditions of this case.” From the defense’s perspective, this was a clear attempt to overturn the First Instance court’s December 11, 1890 ruling and put in effect the mayor’s former June 14, 1890 decision in favor of Astwood, which the First Instance court’s decision had annulled. They called the hearing “absurd,” and “one of the strangest, one of the most inappropriate, one of the most monstrous lawsuits that anyone has ever attempted.” Castillo and Peña’s thus requested that the court not only throw out the case and charge Astwood with the costs, but that it also fine Astwood with an indemnity of $200.00 pesos for moral and material damages. They ended with a variation of a common legal refrain: “It’s justice that we hope for in Santo Domingo.”

Justice came three weeks later, but the First Instance court’s decision was not what either of the parties had hoped or expected. On the one hand, the court agreed with Castillo and Peña that no transaction had occurred to transfer the property from Goodin to Astwood. It thus ruled against Astwood, “maintaining in all ways the

78 Ibid.
sentence of this Tribunal from the date December 11, 1890.”  

It additionally condemned Astwood with all of the expenses of the present lawsuit. On the other hand, the court charged Goodin with an indemnity of $150.00 pesos to be paid to Astwood. Since Goodin had effectively won the lawsuit, this indemnity was unexpected. Yet, the court found fault in the way that Goodin had attempted to repossess the building. From the judges’ perspective, there was no reason for Goodin to have threatened Astwood with legal action since Goodin was the owner of the building according to the December 11, 1890 ruling. Considering that Goodin had entrusted Astwood with the property, the court claimed that Goodin merely needed to enact his legal right as property owner. Yet, when Goodin sent notice to Astwood on July 25th, the language in the notice made it seem as if Astwood had committed an offense (*quasi*-delito). The court thus found Astwood’s complaint partially justified.

The ruling, which found fault with both parties, was most likely a way for the court to placate both Astwood and Goodin, but the sentence also raised another implicit question. Why would Goodin take legal action if he only needed to “exercise his right” as property owner? Although the events between April 13th (Congress’s final decision) and July 25th (Goodin’s notice to vacate) are unknown, it seems likely that Goodin and his congregation attempted to repossess the church building during that time. Yet, given

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79 See the ruling in *Demanda contra la Iglesia Protestante de Santo Domingo*, DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.34-08, Leg. 34, Exp. 8, Year 1891.
the fact that Astwood still had the keys to the building in the *Cautel de las Milicias* and had not paid the court fees from the December 1890 trial, it seems equally likely that Astwood prohibited Goodin from repossessing the church even after National Congress dismissed the land grant. Astwood’s unwillingness to comply with the December ruling would continue to cause problems in the months to come.

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While the judges deliberated on the latest lawsuit between Astwood and Goodin, the thirty-day notice for Astwood to pay the December 11, 1890 courts expired, and the embargo against the AME Church’s property on Consistorial Street proceeded. The process took place over a series of six days. First, on August 27th, 1891, de Bonilla walked to the corner of Consistorial and San Francisco Street and seized the AME Church’s property. Two days later, he visited Astwood in his home to inform him that the property had been seized and that the embargo would be registered with the town hall. Then on Tuesday, September 1st, Goodin’s lawyers traveled to the city’s mortgage office, where they handed over a copy of the verbal summons. If everything went as planned, the property would be auctioned within a month. As prime real estate, it would most likely sell quickly at public auction.

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80 For the embargo record See *Demanda en nulidad de embargo inmobiliario*, DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.34-10, Leg. 34, Exp. 10, Year 1891.
81 For this notice see ibid.
82 Document dated September 1, 1891 in ibid.
For Goodin and the Dominican Protestants, things were looking up. Not only was the embargo process underway, but Goodin had also issued another notice to Astwood on September 7th.\textsuperscript{83} Like the July 25\textsuperscript{th} notice, this one demanded that Astwood abandon the church building. Yet, instead of giving Astwood a forty-eight hour notice, this time the notice stipulated that Astwood must immediately hand over the keys of the building to de Bonilla. If Astwood refused, Goodin would sue him. From Goodin’s perspective, there was little that Astwood could do but comply. Both the December 11, 1890 sentence and the August 24, 1891 sentence had stated that the property belonged to the Dominican Protestants. Even though Astwood continually denied the December 11\textsuperscript{th} sentence, he could not ignore the First Instance court’s latest ruling, which maintained its original sentence.

Astwood, however, had no intentions of giving in to Goodin. Despite the fact that he now owed over $800.00 pesos to the First Instance court, Astwood refused to give the keys to the sheriff.\textsuperscript{84} Then on September 9\textsuperscript{th}, he appealed the latest First Instance court ruling. The Supreme Court would now hear the case in which Astwood sought to have the August 24\textsuperscript{th} sentence voided and Goodin condemned with the costs of both

\textsuperscript{83} This notice is located in Expediente Relativo a la Apelación Interpuesta por Pastor Charles Goodin, DO AGN, Suprema Corte de Justicia 1.1.23A-245, January 23, 1891-October 9, 1891.

\textsuperscript{84} Losing to Goodin on August 24\textsuperscript{th} meant that Astwood was once again charged with court fees. This time the charges amounted to $307.25, which along with the original amount of $563.50 totaled $870.75. For the court fees of August 24\textsuperscript{th} see the notification sent to Astwood on September 4, 1891. \textbf{[LOOKS LIKE THIS “IBID” IS AN ERROR]} Ibid.
trials (i.e. the 8/24/91 trial and the Supreme Court). Thus, if Astwood won the case, he would no longer have to pay the August 1891 First Instance court fees since the penalties would fall on Goodin. This seemed an unlikely ending since the National Congress had dismissed his land grant back in April, but at the very least this maneuver enabled Astwood to reopen the case and stall the due date for the money he owed.

With the Supreme Court case pending, Astwood could focus on extricating himself from the embargo. Like Astwood, Goodin had also gone on the offensive on September 9th, when his lawyers drew up the conditions for the sale of the property. A week later, at Goodin’s request, de Bonilla notified Astwood that the document detailing the conditions was filed with the Secretary of the First Instance court. The notice instructed Astwood to “make the repairs and observations” of the building, and to appear at the First Instance court at 10:00 AM on October 13, 1891, “in order to hear [the conditions for sale] read and published, and to know the date that the Court fixes for the sale of the embargoed property.” Once again, Astwood found himself looking for a way to contest Goodin through the legal system.

Soon he found an easy way to bring the embargo before the courts. In their haste to seize the AME Church’s property, Goodin and his lawyers had made various technical mistakes. Astwood discovered the first error on October 1st, when he requested

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85 Expediente contra Charles Goodin por embargo, DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.35-3, Leg. 35. Exp. 3, Year 1891-1892.
86 Demanda en nulidad de embargo inmobiliario, DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.34-10, Leg. 34, Exp. 10, Year 1891.
87 Ibid.
documentation of de Bonilla’s special power to embargo the property. The law required that the instigator of the embargo give the sheriff legal authority to act on his behalf and proceed with the embargo. Yet, when Astwood asked to see the special power contract, de Bonilla could not produce the document, “Since [I believe that] the named Mr. Goodin did not give it to me, nor anyone [with his] written special power.” Astwood then asked de Bonilla to put this in writing as proof. Days later, on October 6, Astwood sued Goodin, faulting Goodin for not providing the special power to de Bonilla. He furthermore listed other technicalities as grievances. The legal record of the embargo that De Bonilla gave to Astwood did not, “designate the province or the commune where the embargoed building belongs; nor does the said record designate the home address of the prosecutor nor the address of Mr. Astwood the embargoed party.” Astwood additionally found fault with the fact that de Bonilla had not provided him with a copy of the embargo record on August 27th, when he first announced the embargo. These technicalities may have seemed petty, but they effectively enabled Astwood to reenter the courts.

88 Notice from de Bonilla dated October 1, 1891, ibid.
89 Astwood’s summons to Goodin dated October 6, 1891, ibid.
90 Ibid.
5.3 Phase Three: Simultaneous Lawsuits

Of the two pending lawsuits, the trial before the Supreme Court came up first. Atwood’s lawyer, José Meliton Fernández, submitted the prosecution’s arguments to the tribunal on September 23, 1891. In presenting the facts (*Hechos*), Fernández initially made two central arguments. First, he conceded that the December 11, 1890 sentence gave Goodin the right to the property. Based on this fact, he argued that “Mr. Goodin did not have a reason to threaten to sue Mr. Astwood for the possession of the building” on July 25th because Goodin supposedly already owned the temple in the *Cuartel de las Milicias*.91 In other words, all Goodin had to do—if he was in fact the right owner—was exercise his rights and request that Astwood leave. But as Fernandez argued, Goodin was no longer the owner. His second point asserted that, “in the month of February of the present year, the same Mr. Charles Goodin…and his associates voluntarily put—without reservations of any kind—Mr. Astwood…in possession of the building.”92 This transfer of the property meant that the July 25th notice to vacate was “void and arbitrary.” How could Goodin demand Astwood to vacate the building when Goodin no longer owned the property? The notice to vacate made no sense! On the one hand (if Goodin were the owner), it assumed that Astwood had committed a legal offense. On

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91 See document dated September 23, 1891 in * Expediente seguido a Charles Goodin*, DO AGN Corte de Apelación 1.01.C-28/Exp. 198.  
92 Ibid.
the other hand, the notice was void because Astwood was now the legal owner. For this reason, Astwood had summoned Goodin to court.

At the crux of Fernández’s reasoning was the idea that Goodin’s surrender of the property in February was a legal transfer. Fernandez supported this claim with a legal explanation (Derechos). In his perspective, Goodin was in clear violation of the Civil Code, which stated in articles 1234 and 1134 that obligations (i.e. properties) could be disintegrated “by voluntary surrender” and by “mutual consent,” respectively.93 Applying this logic to the case, Fernández claimed that Goodin and his associates had voluntarily given the property to Astwood, who no longer was obligated to them. “How is it that one finds Astwood possessing the church (the building)?” Fernandez asked. “It has to be forcibly presumed that it is because Mr. Charles Goodin and his associates have given the property to him,” he concluded.94 The Protestants of Santo Domingo thus had no right to invoke the December 11th ruling in this case.

Fernandez then argued that Goodin had distorted the law and consequently had caused Astwood damages. He based this claim on the phrasing of the July 25th notice, which specified that Astwood “return” the property to Goodin. As he previously argued before the First Instance court, Fernandez claimed that the December 11, 1890 sentence

93 Art. 1134 states, “Las convenciones legalmente formadas tienen fuerza de ley para aquellos que las han hecho. No pueden ser revocadas, sino por su mutuo consentimiento, o por las causas que están autorizadas por la ley... Art. 1234. Se extinguen las obligaciones: Por el pago. Por la novación. Por la quita voluntaria...” Código civil de la República Dominicana (Santo Domingo: Imprenta de García Hermanos, 1883), 240, 262.
94 Expediente seguido a Charles Goodin, DO AGN Corte de Apelación 1.01.C-28/Exp. 198.
“does not command the return of said possession.” It only stated that the Protestants of the city be “maintained in the building.” Instead of writing return, Goodin should have requested Astwood to “desoccupy or abandon” the building. According to Fernandez, this slight difference in words meant that Goodin had illegally twisted the meaning of the December 11th sentence, “which no one has the right to do.” It was clear that Goodin was misapplying the law. In the process, Goodin had also caused Astwood damages because the word return assumed that Astwood had committed a crime and that the property was not legally transferred in February 1891.95 Fernandez argued that in order for Goodin to win the case, Goodin’s lawyers should have submitted proof of this alleged crime against Goodin. Or, at the very least, “If Goodin did not prove the violence, he should have at least proved that Mr. Astwood was occupying [the property] by mere tolerance; but he did not provide this proof either,” wrote Fernandez.96 Even the First Instance tribunal had recognized this inconsistency and had subsequently charged Goodin with an indemnity of $150.00. “This is one more reason why the [First Instance] tribunal should not have discarded his case,” Fernandez declared.97 Goodin was clearly in the wrong, and in ruling in his favor, the First Instance court had produced an inconsistency of its own.

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95 Articles 1382 and 1383 of the Civil Code stated that an indemnity could be paid if damages are incurred Código civil de la Republica Dominicana (Santo Domingo: Imprenta de García Hermanos, 1883), 297.
96 Expediente seguido a Charles Goodin, DO AGN Corte de Apelación 1.01.C-28/Exp. 198.
97 Ibid.
Goodin’s lawyer, Jesús M. Peña, responded to these allegations on October 6th.\footnote{Peña responded after receiving a letter from Astwood’s lawyers demanding a response. See document dated October 3, 1891 in Expediente Relativo a la Apelación Interpuesta por Pastor Charles Goodin, DO AGN, Suprema Corte de Justicia 1.1.23A-245, January 23, 1891-October 9, 1891.} In his opinion, Goodin was the rightful owner of the building. He stated that it was easy to prove Goodin’s ownership, “which is at times tacitly denied by the counterpart and at other times frankly admitted.”\footnote{See document signed by Jesús Ma. Peña, dated October 5, 1891 and registered October 6th. Expediente seguido a Charles Goodin, DO AGN Corte de Apelación 1.01.C-28/Exp. 198.} The sentence from the December 11, 1890 court ruling was indisputable proof of ownership. After citing the ruling verbatim, he asked, “is this not an explicit declaration that the defendants (Mr. Goodin and his associates) have the right of possession, or in a synonymous phrase, the possession of right?”\footnote{Ibid.} To declare otherwise was to “deny evidence.” Furthermore, if ever there was confusion on the exact meaning of the December 11, 1890 ruling, the First Instance court—the only court that could legally interpret its first ruling—clarified its original meaning when it gave a second ruling on August 24, 1891 and explicitly stated that the December 11\textsuperscript{th} sentence was “an authentic title.” Peña thus declared, “There is no possible doubt...Sr. Goodin and his friends have the right of possession of the building.”\footnote{Ibid.}

Peña then explained that he emphasized this point not to discuss the validity of the December 11\textsuperscript{th} sentence, which he took for granted, but the exact meaning of the words in the ruling that the opposition disputed. The phrase, “[The court] orders that the
defendants be maintained in possession of the building,” could not be stated any differently because Goodin and his associates occupied the building at the time of the December 11th sentence. As Astwood’s lawyers had stated almost a year prior, Peña now declared that, “there is a notable difference between the mere occupation and the possession.” Astwood was occupying the building, but Goodin maintained the right to possession. Herein lied the crux of the dispute. Goodin believed that he was the property owner, while Astwood denied that right.

Peña countered the idea that Goodin had given Astwood the property by stating that the prosecution had misquoted the Civil Code and that Astwood was purposefully attempting to confuse the case. “The counterpart invokes voluntary removal (quita voluntaria) using article 1234, but he doesn’t see that this article contains simply a list of the ways to extinguish obligations,” Peña wrote. Other articles that came later in the text further explained how to transfer properties. He gave article 1282 as an example, which stated that the “voluntary delivery of the original title under private signature, demonstrates proof of liberation.” In other words, in order for Astwood to now own the property, Goodin would have had to sign over the property’s title to Astwood. Yet,

102 Ibid.
103 Ibid.
104 Art. 1282 states, “La entrega voluntaria del título original bajo firma privada, hecha por el acreedor al deudor, vale prueba de la liberación. Art. 1283. La entrega voluntaria de la primera copia del título, hace presumir la quita de la deuda ó el pago, sin perjuicio de la prueba en contrario.” Código civil de la República Dominicana (Santo Domingo: Impr. de García Hermanos, 1884) 273.
this had never occurred, and therefore voluntary removal was not applicable. Peña concluded that Astwood’s insistence that Goodin had given up his rights and voluntarily had handed over the property to Astwood was nothing more than an attempt to “prove what can not be proven” and “a hullabalo impossible to understand.”

Astwood was purposefully trying to confuse the matter “to the point that juridical truth could not be clarified nor reason of law manifested, because if it were he would lose his case.” Peña accused, “In the confusion at least there is the hope of an exit.”

Peña then proved that Goodin and his associates never renounced their right to the property by relating additional facts about the events after December 11, 1890. According to Peña, there was no basis to claim that Astwood now owned the property. It was true that Goodin had allowed Astwood to occupy the building in February, but “nothing reveals that Goodin’s intention was to release his right of possession.”

Instead, he allowed Astwood to occupy as a sort of “truce,” since Astwood had obtained a land grant from the Ministry of Public Works and Goodin and his associates needed time “during which they could acquire resources in order to proceed with the execution of the [December 11th] sentence.” Peña explained that they first went first to the

105 Expediente seguido a Charles Goodin, DO AGN Corte de Apelación 1.01.C-28/Exp. 198.
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
Ministry of Public Works to protest the land grant and then to the National Congress, which ultimately declared the land grant invalid. All of the energy, time, and money that Goodin and his associates had spent in order to maintain their right to the building was proof that they never meant to give up that right. Even when Astwood proposed a formal transfer of the property, they denied his offer.\textsuperscript{109}

At this point, Peña wrote forcefully, demonstrating indignation at Astwood’s schemes. “It's a stupendous thing that the counterparty alleges when it says that an adjudicated sentence can not be maintained!” he exclaimed with regard to Astwood’s denial of Goodin’s ownership to the property.\textsuperscript{110} Peña likewise decried the idea that Goodin had twisted the law. Referring to the July 25\textsuperscript{th} notification to Astwood, Peña stated, “Anyone understands that those words mean: I, Charles Goodin…who has the right of possession based on the title…demand that you [Mr. Astwood] leave the building that you occupy by my pure will.”\textsuperscript{111} Even if Goodin had twisted the law as Astwood claimed, Peña argued that such an act would not extinguish his right to ownership. “The truth is that no matter how Mr. Goodin had demanded Mr. Astwood to leave, this man would have tried to avoid complying with his obligation,” Peña

\textsuperscript{109} At one point, Peña stated that Astwood attempted to have Goodin sign papers: “Cierto es que el Sr. Astwood propuso transacción i su abogado llegó a redactar el escrito correspondiente; pero nuestro defendido no quiso entregar en las vías de la transacción. ¿I para qué iba a hacerlo, cuando había en su favor un título de posesión i se aprestaba para controvertir al otro su flamante derecho de propietario?” Ibid. Such papers were not among the official court records and therefore may no longer exist if they ever existed at all.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
accused. Astwood was merely attempting to find a way “to conceal the nature of his lawsuit,” Peña wrote. The very fact that in July Astwood had first denied that he was the representative of the AME Church and then nullified his words only a few hours later proved Peña’s point: Astwood was committing fraud in order to have the December 11, 1890 sentence reversed.

In conclusion, Peña argued that Astwood’s habitual denial of Goodin’s right had caused Goodin damage, and therefore the August 24th sentence was not completely just in its ruling. Instead of condemning Astwood with an indemnity, the sentence mandated that Goodin must pay Astwood. The indemnity on Goodin was supposedly based on a petty crime (cuasidelito) committed against Astwood. Yet, Peña now put this supposition to the test. “Could this be right?” He asked the court. “Is it possible to…declare damages and prejudices in favor of the party whose lawsuit is dismissed?” Peña answered these rhetorical questions with another proposition; not only should the Supreme Court dismiss Astwood’s appeal, but it should condemn Astwood with an indemnity to Goodin. This, of course, was the defense’s original claim before the First Instance court. The indemnity would account for the fact that Astwood had not handed over the building to Goodin in all the time between July 25th and August 24th. It would

112 Ibid.
113 Ibid.
114 Ibid.
also account for other damages incurred since August 24, namely the “discrimination caused by the First Instance court” (i.e. the indemnity) and the “damages caused by the current appeal.” Peña thus requested that the Supreme Court dismiss Astwood’s appeal, annul the indemnity declared in Astwood’s favor, and condemn Astwood with the costs of the trials and an indemnity for the damages against Goodin.

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With both the prosecution and defense’s statements before the Supreme Court, the two parties waited for a response. On October 12, they were informed that the hearing and discussion of the case would take place a week later on Monday, October 19th. Although this meant that the Supreme Court would not rule on the case for at least that long, the extra time enabled the two men and their lawyers to deal with Astwood’s lawsuit against the embargo in the First Instance court on October 14, 1891.

Standing before the First Instance tribunal, Fernandez explained the prosecution’s arguments in four points. The first and most obvious grievance was the fact that Goodin had not given de Bonilla the special power to act on his behalf and seize the AME Church’s property. The embargo thus violated the legal procedure described in Article 556 of the Civil Procedure Code. This law dictated that sheriffs must have

115 See document dated October 12, 1891 in ibid.
116 “Art. 556. La entrega al alguacil del acto ó de la sentencia, le valdrá poder para las ejecuciones que no se refieran á embargo inmobiliario ó al apremio corporal, para las que necesitará de poder especial.” Código de procedimiento civil de la República Dominicana: Arreglado por la comisión nombrada por el Poder Ejecutivo y
special power in order to seize a property. Fernandez explained that this law protected both the person seizing the land (Goodin) and the embargoed party (Astwood). On the one hand, it guaranteed that no one could embargo a property in the name of another person without that person’s special permission. On the other hand, it assured that if someone did wrongfully seize a property in another’s name, the person could not later come forward and say that he had given permission. This protected the embargoed party from arbitrary acts of seizure. Fernandez thus stated, “this embargo, due to the omitted formality, which is so substantial, should be declared null.”117 He emphasized that even though the law did not explicitly state that violations of article 556 must end in annulment, the counterparty was in clear violation of the law.

The next three arguments seemed less egregious, but they nonetheless also violated the Civil Procedure Code as detailed under “Title XII: Real Estate Embargo.” Under this section of the law, article 675 mandated that all summons regarding embargoes must follow the same procedure as other summons along with additional specifications.118 Fernandez found fault first with the fact that the embargo notice did not include information that was found in all other summons as described in Title II, article

117 See Fernandez’s statement in Demanda en nulidad de embargo inmobiliario, DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.34-10, Leg. 34, Exp. 10, Year 1891.

118 Código de procedimiento civil de la República Dominicana (Santo Domingo: Imprenta la Cuna de América, 1901), 107.
Specifically, the notification and embargo record that the sheriff gave Astwood did not state, “the address or room of the prosecutor nor the embargoed party.” Second, the embargo record did not include province and commune of the goods that were to be embargoed, as required in article 675. Third, Goodin and his lawyers had violated article 677, when they did not provide a copy of the summons of the embargo (proceso verbal de embargo) with the notification of the embargo (acto de denuncia). Under yet another article in Title XII, the violations of articles 675 and 677 meant that the embargo should automatically be nullified.

In contrast to Fernandez’s technical explication, Peña’s response read more like an angry letter than a legal counter-argument. In Peña’s opinion, the lawsuit was a farce that obstructed the higher purpose of law. He first explained that the laws about legal

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119 Art. 61 states, “En el acta de emplazamiento se hará constar, á pena de nulidad: 1º la fecha del día, mes y año; los nombres, profesión y domicilio del demandante; la designación del abogado que defenderá por él, y en cuyo estudio es de derecho la elección de domicilio, á menos de que no se haga constar otro por el mismo emplazamiento: 2º el nombre y residencia del alguacil, así como el tribunal donde ejerza sus funciones; los nombres y residencia del demandado; y nombre de la persona á quien se entregue la copia del emplazamiento: 30 el objeto de la demanda, con la exposición sumaria de los medios: y 4º la indicación del tribunal que deba conocer de la demanda, así como la del plazo para la comparecencia.” Ibid., 24.

120 “Art. 675…si es una casa, la provincia ó distrito, la común, la calle, el numero si lo hubiere; y en caos contrario dos por le menos de sus linderos y confines; si son bienes rurales, la designación de los edificios, cuando los hubiere; la naturaleza el contenido aproximativo de cada pieza ó departamento, el nombre del colono ó arrendatario, si hubiere alguno; la provincia ó distrito y común en que los bienes radiquen, etc. ” Ibid., 107.

121 “Art. 677 El embargo inmobiliario se denunciará al embargo dentro de los quince días que sigan al de la clausura del acta, más un día por cada tres leguas de distancia entre el domicilio del embargado y el lugar en que esté establecido el tribunal que haya de conocer del asunto, y se visará el original del acta por el presidente del Ayuntamiento de la común en que el acto de la denuncia se haya notificado.” Ibid.

122 The other article was 715, which states “Las formalidades prescritas por los artículos 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 696, 698, 699, 704, 705, 706, 709 1o y 3o, se observarán á pena de nulidad.” Ibid 115.
procedure, “do not intend to protect the debtor from his obligation such that he can elude compliance or delay it at his will; no! That purpose would be immoral.”123 The law did not exist to protect immorality, nor were legal procedures supposed to be the sole base for delaying payment of a debt. It was clear that Astwood, the debtor, “does not want to resolve his debt, the fact of which has given way to this embargo procedure.”124 Peña then reminded the tribunal that the case at hand was merely about “filling out short formalities,” and that the tribunal, “is not obligated to annual the embargo according to article 715 of the Civil Procedure Code.”125 According to Fernandez the court had the power and discretion to decide wither or not the necessary information had been included or omitted or whether the whole trial was a shame and should be thrown out. Peña, after all, maintained that the case lacked “juridical basis” due to its evident purpose to keep Astwood from paying the debt.

Peña then attacked each of the prosecution’s arguments one by one. Regarding the first, he simply stated that the law about special power should not be discussed in this case. In the first place, he claimed that, “the embargo was made in the virtue of special power given to the sheriff.”126 Yet, there was no needed to prove this supposed special power, since the law did not explicitly state that an embargo would be nullified

123 See document signed by Peña and dated October 15, 1891 in Demanda en nulidad de embargo inmobiliario, DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.34-10, Leg. 34, Exp. 10, Year 1891.
124 Ibid.
125 Ibid.
126 Ibid. There is no written evidence of this “special power.”
without said special power. The prosecution’s claim was thus, “impertinent and useless.”\textsuperscript{127} The only way that an embargo could be nullified was if it was found in violation of the articles listed in article 715, which did not mention the special power at all.

Regarding articles 675 and 61, Peña expressed indignation at the prosecution’s claim that the embargo had omitted Goodin and Astwood’s addresses. “Does the law demand that we make declarations at a whim, formulas and hot air just to fill sheets and waste paper sealing the parts? Or in making the law, did not the legislator understand completely what he was doing and made the law in consideration of some idea?”\textsuperscript{128} Peña then explained that the idea that the legislator had in mind was to avoid confusion of who exactly was being sued and by whom. “This is rational, the moral, of common sense and good faith,” he declared.\textsuperscript{129} “If by law someone sues me, it is essential that I know who is suing me and that he is suing me and not another.”\textsuperscript{130} Thus, the whole point in providing addresses was to clarify who exactly the two parties were.

Yet, in this case the clarification was not needed because the parties were already well acquainted. Peña rhetorically challenged the prosecution to claim otherwise.

“Would the opposition seriously affirm that it does not know who Mr. Charles Goodin

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.
is?” he asked. He continued to mock the prosecution with another question. If Astwood were to win this case, “how would he find Mr. Goodin’s pretended unknown home so that Goodin could pay the fines?” Clearly, Astwood knew exactly who Mr. Goodin was, even though the embargo notification did not state his residence. Peña explained that if Goodin had moved for some reason, then it would be necessary to explicitly state the address of the new residence. Yet, this had not happened. Therefore, Astwood should have assumed that Goodin was living at the last address on record. Moreover, Peña claimed that the embargo notification did, indeed, announce Goodin’s address in a way. He suggested that the word domicilio (address) was not always needed. The notification identified Mr. Goodin with the words “Pastor of the Protestant Church of the City of Santo Domingo and President of the Congregation,” and these words should have sufficed as an announcement of Goodin’s address since “he has come from abroad to carry out that position in the country and because of the nature of the profession of pastor.” The notice furthermore listed the address of Goodin’s lawyer, which was needed for all correspondence regarding the embargo. Goodin’s personal address was “superfluous information” but the lawyer’s address was an “important designation,” the absence of which would lead to nullity.

131 Ibid.
132 Ibid.
133 Ibid.
In a similar way, Peña also dismissed the prosecution’s claim that the notice had omitted Astwood’s address. This fact did not mislead Astwood, who knew without doubt that the embargo was direct at him. Peña copied the notice verbatim, demonstrating that it was addressed to, “H.C.C. Astwood representative of the African Methodist E. Church of the U.S. of N.A. of this home and residence.” Again Peña ridiculed Astwood:

“Could they be distinct these two men? (Could there be two antichrists?). It seems proven according to the high principles and the most general conclusions of modern philosophy that Mr. Astwood is Mr. Astwood: A is A, according to the logic books.”

There was no mistake in determining who Astwood was, neither was there a mistake in not listing the address. Peña explained again that the point of stating the address was to make known the address when it was unknown, and this was not the case.

Peña did not spend much time on the last two grievances, which he also rejected on principle. First, attempting to nullify the embargo based on the fact that the notice did not list the province and commune was a “pure joke.” The notice did in fact say, “In the city of Santo Domingo.” Peña asked, “Is not ‘Santo Domingo’ the city capital of the Republic, its province and commune? Is there any other city in the Republic by this same name...with which we could confuse the place where we are all located?”

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134 Ibid.
135 Ibid.
136 Ibid.
the embargo on this technicality did not make any sense. Likewise, the fact that a copy of the embargo was not given meant nothing. Peña explained that if the sheriff were to omit a copy in his minutes, the penalty could not result in nullity of the embargo because “The procedures of a sheriff could not be declared null, if they were not formally pronounced by law.” This was a known law in the legal procedure code. Like the prosecution’s former accusations, these last two points were absurd attempts to terminate the embargo without justifiable reason. Peña concluded with the request that the judges dismiss the prosecution’s demands and condemn Astwood with the costs of the trial.

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Astwood, Goodin, and their congregations and lawyers waited only a few weeks for the Supreme Court and First Instance court’s responses to both cases. Short and unadorned with much legal explanation, the rulings were perhaps an anticlimatic end to the last seventeen months of storytelling, politicking, and scheming counterattacks. They were also bittersweet, for each side succeeded in one case but lost the other.

137 “Art. 1030. Ningún acto de alguacil ó de procedimiento se podrá declarar nulo, si la nulidad no está formalmente pronunciada por la ley. En los casos en que la ley no hubiere pronunciado la nulidad, se podrá condenar al curial, sea por omisión ó contravención, á una multa que no bajará de un peso, ni excederá de veinte.” Código de procedimiento civil de la República Dominicana (Santo Domingo: Imprenta la Cuna de América, 1901), 172.
On October 26, 1891, the five judges of the Supreme Court tribunal annulled the August 24\textsuperscript{th} sentence, but still ruled undoubtedly in favor of Goodin.\textsuperscript{138} Stating that they would not judge on the validity of the December 11\textsuperscript{th} sentence since “we do not have competency in the matter,” they explained three main reasons for their decision.\textsuperscript{139} First, they did not believe that it was necessary for Astwood to take the matter to court.\textsuperscript{140} Second, they stated that Goodin could not have caused Astwood material or moral damages since Goodin had not caused any expenses in the case. Indeed, it was Astwood who had caused expenses. The First Instance court thus committed an error when it charged Goodin with an indemnity. Third, the Supreme Court stated that the First Instance court never should have mentioned the December 11\textsuperscript{th}, 1890 sentence since it already had passed a definitive judgment. It therefore should have judged only on the validity of the July 25\textsuperscript{th} notice. Considering these errors, the court voided the August 24\textsuperscript{th} sentence, but also rejected Astwood’s “inadmissible appeal,” charging him with the costs of both the August 25\textsuperscript{th} and the Supreme Court hearings. It seemed that the Supreme Court (like Goodin and Peña) had also recognized Astwood’s antics and were now punishing him—a decisive victory for Goodin.

\textsuperscript{138} The judges were: the interim president, Nicolás Rodríguez; the judges, José Pantaleón Soler, José Anto. Bonilla y España, and Manuel Lamarche Garica; and the fiscal judge Rafael Rodríguez Montaño. Only the first four judges signed the document.
\textsuperscript{139} See the tribunal’s sentence in Expediente seguido a Charles Goodin, DO AGN Corte de Apelación 1.01.C-28/Exp. 198.
\textsuperscript{140} The court said that Astwood could have simply answered Goodin’s July 25\textsuperscript{th} notice with another legal notice that would have made it possible to avoid the courts.
The happy news for Goodin, however, was overshadowed two days later when the First Instance court ruled in favor of Astwood. The three magistrates of the tribunal had read both testimonies and had also consulted with de Bonilla, and they concluded that Goodin was in plain violation of the Civil Procedure.\textsuperscript{141} As Fernandez had explained, Goodin had violated laws 61, 556, 675, 677, and 715. They had not given the sheriff special power to proceed with the embargo and they had not specified the addresses of the two parties, the province and commune of the AME building. Lastly, they had not given Astwood a copy of the embargo record. “Considering that the embargo of reference has omitted the formalities aforementioned, it should be declared null and of no value or effect,” the judges stated.\textsuperscript{142} As expected, the court condemned Goodin with the expense of the trial.

By November 1891, it seemed that the dispute between the two Protestant pastors had finally come to an end. Goodin would pay the First Instance court fees for the legal errors he had made during the embargo process, and—now that all levels of the court recognized that Goodin held the title to the Protestant church building—one could only assume that Astwood would relent and finally hand over the property.

Astwood, on the other hand, was worse off than he was months before when he dared

\textsuperscript{141} The judges were: the president, Alvaro Logroño; the judge, Miguel E. Garrido, co-judge and the judge of instruction, Juan Bta. Matos (who was a substitute in these roles); and the fiscal attorney, Alejandro S. Vicioso. The document was signed by Alvaro Logroño, Miguel E. Garrido, Fermin Rodrigo Gonzalez Trio and César Nicolás Pensón. The last two were most likely the co-judges for whom Juan Bta. Matos stood in.

\textsuperscript{142} Demanda en nulidad de embargo inmobiliario, DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.34-10, Leg. 34, Exp. 10, Year 1891.
to take the dispute back to court. He now owed a total of $1200.75 pesos to the courts, over double the debt he owed in July 1891. The legal proceedings had bought him time but at a major cost. With still no aid from the U.S. and after months of fighting through the court system, anyone else but Astwood would have given up.

### 5.4 The Aftermath: The Inconclusive Conclusion of the Protestant Dispute

In March 1892—only four months after the decisions passed by the Supreme Court and First Instance tribunal—the dispute between Goodin and Astwood was once again before the First Instance court. This was Astwood’s last desperate attempt to save the AME Church’s property, for in December 1891 Goodin had placed another embargo on the building; and, this time he had followed the correct procedure. In February 1892, the First Instance court approved the embargo and fixed the sale of the property for March 21st. Yet, before the auction day arrived Astwood once again summoned Goodin to court, using yet another tactic. In the summons Astwood described himself as the representative of the Foreign Missionary Association of the AME Church. He then called for two distinct parties to appear before the tribunal. On the one hand, he summoned Goodin and his associates and lawyers. On the other hand, Astwood called

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143 The Supreme Court of Justice charged Astwood $330.00. He thus owed a total of $1200.75. *Expediente seguido a Charles Goodin*, DO AGN Corte de Apelación 1.01.C-28/Exp. 198.

144 Goodin submitted the embargo on December 15, 1891, and notified Astwood the next day. *Expediente contra Charles Goodin por embargo*, DO AGN Juzgados 1.6.35-3, Leg. 35. Exp. 3, Year 1891-1892.

145 See document dated February 15, 1892 in *ibid*.

146 Summons dated March 3, 1892 in *ibid*.
Juan Ramón Rincón, the lawyer he had appointed to represent the AME Church. As Astwood would argue before the court, the embargoed building did not belong to the AME Church, but to the *Foreign Missionary Association* of the AME Church. This distinction, he asserted, meant that the embargo was void.

Standing before the court on March 14th, Jesús María de Peña anticipated his response to Astwood. He had foreseen the pending lawsuit the moment that Astwood’s lawyer, José Militon Fernández, visited his office last December and verbally informed him that the property was not in the name of the AME Church.147 Fernández had even shown Peña the title to the property, made out to the misspelled “*Foregn Meissionary Association* of the AME Church of the United States of America.”148 Back then Peña had easily dismissed Fernandez, challenging him to bring the matter to court. Now that they were before the tribunal, Peña reckoned that he had the advantage. Of all of the schemes Astwood had deployed in order to avoid the embargo, this one was the least sound. Even Astwood must have known that he had little chance of winning, for he did not appear at the hearing. Fernández stood alone before the court with no explanation for Astwood’s absence. Goodin, on the other hand, stood by Peña’s side as Peña calmly contested Fernandez’s claims.

147 See Fernández’s statement dated March 14, 1892 in ibid.
148 See documents dated March 23, 1888 in ibid.
The matter was simple. A distraction lawsuit could only take place if the prosecuting party could prove that it was in fact a separate entity from the embargoed party, and this was something that Astwood could not do. “Mr. H.C.C. Astwood, representative of the ‘Foreign Missionary Association’ and of the AMEC. should know more than anyone the relationships that link the [two entities],” Peña asserted as he provided a copy of the AME Church’s doctrine.\(^{149}\) Not only did the doctrine state that the Foreign Missionary Association was part of the AME Church, but Astwood had always responded to the title, “Representative of the AME Church.” Indeed, “It was in the name of [the AME Church], the embargoed party, that [Astwood] asked and obtained before this Tribunal on October 28\(^{th}\) of last year the nullity of the [first] embargo!” Peña stated.\(^{150}\) The very fact that Astwood now claimed that the property did not belong to the AME Church proved his fraud. It was obvious that Astwood was merely trying to “[rid] the AMEC. of the unfavorable consequences of legal action.”\(^{151}\) Yet, such schemes were not permissible in court and only served to disrupt justice. Without further elaboration, Peña asked the courts to dismiss the lawsuit and condemn Astwood with the costs.

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\(^{149}\) See Peña’s statement dated March 14, 1892 in ibid.

\(^{150}\) Ibid. Included in the records was a translated excerpt from the Discipline of the AME Church.

\(^{151}\) Ibid.
Months later, on July 14, 1892, the First Instance court called Astwood’s bluff. It deemed the prosecutions assertions as unfounded and threw out the case before the courts.\footnote{See the tribunal’s ruling in ibid.} Two years of legal proceedings had finally ended. Astwood left for the United States months after the sentence, and the Dominican Protestants finally took control of the small temple in the Cuartel de las Milicias—or so it seems.

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The weather was stormy in New York City on November 16, 1892, when the bishops of the AME Church reconvened at 2:30 PM at 61 Bible House for the afternoon session of the AME missionary department’s (PHFMS) mid-year meeting.\footnote{“The Weather,” \textit{Boston Daily Advertiser}, November 17, 1892.} Rev. E.H. Bolden, the chairman of the auditing committee, was the first to present a report. “We have examined the ledger, cash and day books, vouchers and receipts; covering the period elapsed since the close of the last quadrennium, May 1\textsuperscript{st}, 1892,” he stated before congratulating the Missionary Secretary, W.B. Derrick for “his efficient services in accuracy,” and “accounting for all funds entrusted to him.”\footnote{W.M.H. Butler, “Office of the Home and Foreign Missionary Society,” \textit{Voice of Missions} 1, no. 1 (January 1893), 1.} A committee was then appointed to prepare an official statement that would inform the governing body on the state of the missionary field in the United States and abroad. Since the committee was to present the report at 9:00 AM the next day, the bishops allotted time for various visiting
missionaries to address the board; Representing Santo Domingo, Rev. Henry C.C.

Astwood was the first to present.

Unfortunately, the exact words that Astwood spoke were not recorded in the meeting minutes, although we can infer that he told the missionary board exactly what it hoped to hear. Astwood spoke little of the last two years of legal proceedings in Santo Domingo. Instead, he chose to discuss the potential of the country as a missionary field.

“In the main, [Astwood’s] report was cheering,” the minutes read. The only disappointing news was that “Litigation to secure and retain our property thus leaves the department indebted to Rev. H.C.C. Astwood in the sum of ---- dollars.” This undisclosed amount was likely a great deal of money, but the important thing was that “the title is now unquestionably secured to the Connection.” Having no reason to question Astwood’s assessment, the board accepted his report and moved on to that of Rev. J.A.M. Johns of St. Thomas.

The next day, Santo Domingo was once again the subject of conversation. Rev. Charles Williams, the AME Missionary stationed at San Pedro de Macorís, presented a supplemental report. Then, after additional reports on Haiti and St. Thomas, “The Board

155 Ibid.
156 Ibid.
157 Ibid.
158 By this time, the St. Thomas congregation was disintegrated. I have yet to find more information on Johns. For more on St. Thomas, see R.A. Sealy, “Our West Indian Missionary Work,” Voice of Missions 9, no. 2 (February 1901): 11.
ordered the Secretary to pay Rev. H.C.C. Astwood the sum of one hundred dollars ($100) on account of his claim for advances made by him on our Santo Domingo City mission property.”

Whether or not this was the full amount the PHFMS owed—if it owed Astwood anything at all—is unknown.

Rumors that Astwood was a con artist disguising himself as a minister, however, were not entirely concealed. “In view of certain reports heretofore circulated detrimental to the character and usefulness of Rev. H.C.C. Astwood, as Supt. of our mission work,” the minutes state, “the Board being fully advised thereof, [ordered] that a thorough investigation be made by the Bishop during his visit to said country.”

Despite this declaration, it was not clear which bishop would visit the Dominican Republic or when he would do so. And, given the poor financial state of the PHFMS, the stated intention to investigate the situation was essentially the same as turning a blind eye to the matter. The missionary department could neither afford to send a bishop to Santo Domingo nor pay any debt the bishop might encounter while there. It was better that some questions about Astwood’s behavior remain unanswered.

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The end of the conflict between Astwood and Goodin remains a mystery since no further reports of the outcome of the lawsuit exist. It is thus a great irony that at the

159 Ibid.
160 Ibid.
same meeting in which Astwood dissembled information about the events in Santo Domingo, the Missionary Board also recognized, “the necessity of some direct and adequate medium of reaching the Connection with all the facts, statistics and missionary information and appeals,” and thus approved the creation of a missionary newspaper, *The Voice of Missions*. It seems that despite the Missionary Board’s best intentions to “place [the PHFMS] claims properly before the church and world,” with a newly founded monthly publication, some silences remained.

Indeed, in all AME documents and oral accounts, the lawsuit between Goodin and Astwood was effectively erased. Even Rev. Jacob P. James Jr., who visited the Dominican Republic in 1893, a year after the disputed ended, had nothing to say of the lawsuit. In a letter to the *Christian Recorder* published in June 1893, he indirectly addressed Goodin and his congregation when he listed “the Wesleyans” as one of the challenges of missionary work in the capital. James Jr. did not reveal, however, that the majority of these Wesleyans were former members of the AME Church. Nor did he make known the fact that the Wesleyans’ pastor was a black man who was first commissioned by the AME Church, the Rev. Charles E. Goodin. James Jr. was not alone in concealing these facts—if he was ever aware of them—for the Missionary Board did

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161 Ibid.
162 Ibid.
163 “News of the Week,” *Christian Recorder*, June 1, 1893.
not live up to its promise of investigating the charges against Astwood. In fact, no AME bishop or episcopal officer traveled to the Dominican Republic during the next quadrennial (1892-1896). Unsurprisingly, the missionary newspaper *The Voice of Missions* (est. January 1893) also never made the conflict between Goodin and Astwood fully known to the AME public. For his part, Astwood joined the first episcopal district and was assigned to a parish in Scranton, Pennsylvania, where he remained a venerated, albeit controversial figure among African Methodists in the northeast United States.

As for Goodin and the Dominican Protestants, the process of erasing the memory of the dispute was not as easy, although they too never recorded details of the outcome of the lawsuit. According to Goodin’s family’s oral history, Goodin and his wife Alice Meyers would once in a while mention a dispute that left them in ownership of the property where they lived in Santo Domingo, but the conflict was never fully disclosed. Similarly, besides the court records, no other document portrayed the Dominican Protestants as making up part of a nationalist non-Catholic religious sect in the capital. After 1892, the Dominican Protestants were known as “Protestants,” “Methodists,” and “Wesleyans,” but never as an independent national denomination.

The erasure of the nationalist “Dominican Protestants” is partially a result of the fact that as soon as Astwood left the island, the congregation pursued membership with

164 James Jr. reiterated that, “a visit from our bishop to this island would do much good.” Ibid.
165 Author’s correspondence with Eric Rivier Jimenez, May 30, 2016. Jimenez is a descendant of Goodin.
another denomination that would provide financial assistance through its missionary board. As Astwood originally accused in 1890, Goodin sought to hand over the congregation to the Wesleyan church. Yet, according to oral history, the Wesleyans denied Goodin on account of his color. While this is most likely true, the Wesleyans did accept Goodin as an evangelist preacher (a subordinate role to that of an ordained pastor) and allowed him to affiliate with their missions in the Dominican Republic and Haiti, although they refused to pay him for his work. Goodin thus began to look for sponsorship elsewhere. It was not until 1894 that he found a match with the Christian Missionary Alliance (CMA) of New York. With the letters of support from the Wesleyans in 1894, he met with CMA leaders, who accepted him in spite of his color, ordained him a minister, and received the congregation’ properties, which Goodin, “had already, with a good deal of trust, ventured to put in the name of the Missionary Alliance.”

Thus, the properties belonging to the Dominican Protestants passed to CMA, and the Dominican Protestants of Santo Domingo became members of the Wesleyan church.

This transfer, however, raises the question of whether the CMA came into possession of the same building in the Cuartel de las Milicias over which Goodin and his associates disputed with the AME Church. There is reason for doubt. Curiously—and

without a recorded explanation—within a year after the final court decision, in November 1893, the Dominican Protestants publically requested donations to support them in purchasing a new place of worship.\textsuperscript{167} Thus, Goodin who, “nobly exerted himself to raise money to purchase the buildings,” bought at least one of the properties that the CMA received.\textsuperscript{168} Moreover, years later, in 1910, Jacob Paul James Jr. claimed that the AME Church owned two properties in Santo Domingo; these are presumably the same properties as before.\textsuperscript{169} Consequently, it is difficult to determine which group—the Christian Missionary Alliance or the AME Church—ultimately retained the buildings in the Cuartel de las Milicias and on Consistorial Street. Perhaps Astwood was not lying when he reassured the Missionary Board in 1892 that the buildings remained in the name of the AME Church.

The inconclusive results of the legal dispute are the consequence of silences in the archive. Both Astwood’s and Goodin’s attempts to use law in order to claim property rights reveals how frictions within the Afro-diasporic relationship at times work to create historical narrative by actively erasing stories that are less than flattering. For the sake of downtrodden African Americans in the United States and a minority religious group in the Dominican Republic, it was in everyone’s best interest to forget

\textsuperscript{167} Listín Diario. 28 November 1893, cited in footnote 7 of chapter 2 of H. Hoetink, The Dominican People, 1850-1900: Notes for a Historical Sociology (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 216.
\textsuperscript{168} “A New Missionary for Hayti,” Foreign Missionary Weekly 13, no. 15 (October 1894): 353.
\textsuperscript{169} J.P. James, “AME Church Work at Samaná, Santo Domingo,” Voice of Missions 18, no. 2 (February 1910): 6.
the past. Thus, neither African Methodists in the United States nor Protestants on the
island perpetuated knowledge of the lawsuit that had so disgraced the Protestant church
and its adherents within Dominican society.
6. Practical Destiny: Jacob P. James Jr. and the AME Retreat to Samaná

This chapter examines the life of Jacob Paul James Jr. as he grew up in the Dominican Republic, ministered in the United States, and returned to the island for missionary work. As a minister of the AME Church, James Jr. worked with African-American clergy to spread Christian values and uplift the black race in the United States and abroad. His relationships with other African Methodists spanned national borders and were the product of a broader network of people and ideas that flowed across the black diaspora.

Yet, as explored in chapter 2, forging and maintaining diasporic connections was never an easy process for James Jr. and other Afro-Caribbeans. Despite James Jr.’s initial success in spreading the AME Church in the Dominican Republic, he never received the moral and financial support he needed from the AME missionary department (PHFMS). James Jr.’s story thus also reveals the types of frictions that occurred within Afro-diasporic relationships, even as Afro-descendants across the circum-Caribbean traveled, wrote, and preached across borders in an effort to unite the race.

6.1 Jacob P. James Jr. in Samaná and the United States

Rev. Jacob A. James Sr. and his wife Anne, raised their son, Jacob Paul James Jr., within the African-American immigrant enclave of Samaná, a world seemingly set apart from the rest of the Dominican Republic. Coming of age in the 1870s, James Jr. lived at a
time when the peninsula was just beginning to transform into an increasingly diverse and foreign-influenced region. In his adolescence, he witnessed his father’s interview with the U.S. Commission to Santo Domingo in 1871. At the same time, he also met Frederick and Charles R. Douglass when Frederick Douglass interviewed the Methodist congregation that James Jr.’s father led. These interactions were extremely unusual, and James Jr. would have remembered them even if he did not immediately realize that they were indicative of broader structural shifts in international politics. Other changes would have seemed less conspicuous. In his childhood, James Jr. may have played with the sons and daughters of British Caribbean immigrants in Samaná. Like other children of the time, he would have helped grow crops on the family farm and perhaps sold them at market. Since he grew up speaking English, Spanish, and probably some French creole, he conversed easily with a variety of clients. He may or may not have noticed, however, the increasingly foreign influence on the streets of the port-town. It is likely that as a child and adolescent James Jr. perceived the peninsula’s multiculturalism as normal.

James Jr.’s life—his social position and the opportunities afforded to him—however was anything but normal. Unlike most other black U.S. immigrant children in Samaná, James Jr. came from a family of prominent black leaders that had distinguished

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1 James Jr. was born in 1856. He was fourteen when the commission came to Samaná.
themselves within the Samaná community and among white and black religious and political leaders. According to oral history, James Jr.’s father, Jacob Anthony, and uncle, Jeremiah, were both selected by white Wesleyan missionaries to become local preachers in the Samaná church.³ They were supposed to travel to Haiti together, where they would receive their orders in Port-au-Prince, but only Jacob Anthony went. By 1865 James Jr.’s father was the preacher in charge of the Wesleyan church at Samaná and the surrounding rural regions. This was a remarkable achievement since black men were usually prevented from becoming clergy of any kind, let alone ministers to a congregation of two hundred and fifty members with four hundred regular attendees. But Wesleyan missions in Haiti were chronically understaffed, and James’s ordination enabled him to serve the community with limited support from his white missionary superiors. Jacob Paul’s other uncle, Theophilus, was also a well-known leader. Theophilus had received his education in England, where he lived for seven years as a young man. Upon his return to the island in 1861, Theophilus became a translator and customs collector in Haiti. During the war against Haitian President Salnave, he served on Salnave’s staff as a camp aid and held a number of positions in the army before fleeing to Nassau.⁴ By the 1870s, both Theophilus and James Sr. had traveled within and outside of Hispaniola, and all three James brothers were well respected within the

Samaná community. It was expected that Jacob P. James Jr., who’s “character was molded under the care of a Christian, watchful father,” would follow suit.\(^5\)

Yet, despite James Jr.’s hope to become a Methodist preacher like his father, the Wesleyan Church leadership held him back. In 1878, James Sr. and another Wesleyan missionary, Rev. Belby, advocated on James Jr.’s behalf and asked that he be admitted to a Wesleyan school in Jamaica.\(^6\) Over two years later, on March 21, 1881, James Sr. inquired with the Methodist Missionary Society about the status of the application. “Permit me to inform you, that I am very sorry to see that the committee have not counted me worthy of admitting my eldest son Jacob P. James to the Jamaica Institution,” he wrote. “[Jacob James Jr.] is now in his 24\(^{th}\) year of age and so so much time have elapsed already,” stated James Sr. as he asked that the Society reply and inform him whether they would admit his son or not.\(^7\) It is unknown whether the Society did respond, but if it did, James did not receive a positive answer. James Jr. was never admitted to the Wesleyan school, and father and son began to devise an alternative plan.

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\(^6\) According to Nehemiah Willmore, the Wesleyan church elected James and his cousin Peter to be trained for pastoral work. I have yet to find documents that confirm the claim about Peter. The story however interestingly follows the same storyline of Jacob Sr. and his brother Jeremiah; James Jr. leaves while Peter stays behind. See Willmore, “Esbozo histórico,” 259.
\(^7\) See Jacob James to the General Secretaries Wesleyan Mission House, March 21, 1881, *Methodist Missionary Society Archives*, Microfiche, General Commission on Archives and History, United Methodist Church.
On July 1, 1881, Jacob James Jr. embarked on a journey that would enable him to not only match but surpass his father’s achievements. Traveling with his father on the steamship the *Santo Domingo,* James Jr. headed for the United States, where he planned to pursue an education. The trip took nearly two weeks. The steamer stopped first in Santo Domingo, then Samaná, Puerto Plata, and the Turks Islands, where the rumors that U.S. president James Garfield was shot were most likely confirmed. This news was surely startling to both father and son, who most likely wondered about what the political environment would be like when they finally arrived in the United States. Would the stabilized yet bedridden president survive? And, what would happen to James Jr. once his father returned to the Dominican Republic? These questions most likely dominated the two James’s thoughts as they bided their time on the *Santo Domingo.*

The James arrived in New York on July 11, 1881. In many ways, New York City represented the antithesis of rural Samaná. Unlike the Dominican countryside, where the black American enclave prospered, James Sr. and James Jr. likely experienced hardship in the northern metropolis. In the 1880s, black migrants from the U.S. south and the Caribbean were just beginning to settle in the city. Fleeing Jim Crow violence and the slump of the British Caribbean sugar market, these migrants found a refuge in

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northern U.S. cities in the years leading up to World War I. In 1881, however, their presence had not yet made an impact on New York’s demographics. Of the 1,206,299 people living in New York City in 1880, only 20,000 black people lived in Manhattan by 1884. The growing population, pushed north by Irish immigrants, crammed the Tenderloin district between the west twenties and thirties blocks. The high rents and demand for housing meant that many families kept boarders. Close living quarters and overpopulation harvested disease, which affected blacks at overwhelming rates. Making matters worse, few self-help and charitable organizations existed for blacks in the 1880s. The picture would have been bleak and the prospects were grim for travelers like James Jr. and James Sr.; black New Yorkers were among the city’s poorest residents and had little hope for social mobility. Confronting this reality, the father and son duo most likely did not stay long in the metropolis, but instead made their way to New Jersey, where James Sr. was born.

With their base in New Jersey, the James began to travel to various churches where they solicited aid for the Wesleyan congregation in Samaná and searched for ways to integrate James Jr. into the ministry. To accomplish these goals, they

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10 Sacks, Before Harlem, 5.
11 Ibid., 35.
emphasized their historic ties to the United States. Their visit to Philadelphia, where James Sr. addressed the congregation of the first AME Church (Mother Bethel), provides an example of how they went about asking for aid. During this trip, the father and son pair stopped by the office of the Christian Recorder, where they spoke about the church in Samaná. According to an article describing their visit, James Sr. stated that there was, “a great need of missionaries in Samaná as the people there who represent the A.M. Church are desirous of continuing their relations thereto, and have been obliged to seek assistance through the Wesleyan Methodists of England.”12 This portrayal of the people’s needs is interesting in that—like the 1872 letter from Santo Domingo (Chapter 1)—it implied that the U.S. black immigrant community in Samaná had always been part of the AME Church. Perhaps James Sr. thought that this emphasis on the kinship and religious ties between the two groups would incite the AME congregations in the United States to provide some aid to his church. To this end, he also presented Samaná as a region of potentially greater significance than Port-au-Prince. He claimed that, “there are a great many more persons speaking English on the Spanish end of the Island than on the French,” and expressed hope that Rev. Charles Mossell—the AME missionary recently sent to Haiti—would soon come to Samaná and begin a church there. “There is no doubt if Rev. Mossell could visit that part of the island he might be able to establish a

successful mission station in Samaná,” James Sr. stated. Once again in their land of origin and in need of assistance, the elder James described his community as an extension of the African American community in the United States, and reached out to the AME Church for aid.

For James Jr. this trip to his father's “home” renewed the hope that he would be able to follow in his father’s footsteps and become a minister. On September 22, 1881—just two months after his arrival in New York and one week after visiting Philadelphia—an article in the *Christian Recorder* caught his eye. “Wanted—Young Men,” read the bolded title of an advertisement placed by Rev. Jesse S. Wood of the AME Iowa Conference. The ad called for those, “who have the Christian ministry of the AME church in view” and informed young male readers that they could, “obtain a free scholarship [at Beloit] College” in Wisconsin. James Jr.’s spirits must have soared as he reread the ad. He may have even prayed that God would grant him the opportunity to continue his education—a blessing that his father had never received. James Jr.’s next steps were crucial. The ad instructed interested applicants to write to Rev. Wood, but James Jr. first contacted AME bishop Rev. William Fischer Dickerson for further

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13 It seems that James Sr. had made plans to stay in the United States for a long time since he expressed willingness to meet Rev. Mossell in the fall. Ibid.
14 Ibid.
instruction. Although Dickerson was in London attending the Ecumenical Methodist Conference along with other prominent AME leaders, James Jr. eventually received his approval. With encouragement from both Dickerson and Wood, in 1882 James Jr. matriculated at the Academy of Beloit College, where he joined a handful of other students from the Caribbean and pursued classical studies for five years.

In seeking his education abroad, James Jr. took a path that other Afro-descended young men from Samaná and the broader Caribbean would follow as Afro-Caribbeans began to forge greater connections to African-Americans in the United States. Often marginalized within their native societies, Afro-Caribbean students attended schools in the U.S. in order to advance socially in their countries of birth. In the 1880s and 1890s, Samaná immigrant descendants sent their children to the U.S. to become nurses and

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17 In 1881, thirty-six-year-old Rev. Dickerson was a newly elected bishop and the youngest man to ever rise to the bishopric. Prior to being elected bishop, he pastored Bethel AME church on Sullivan Street in New York for three years beginning in 1877. How James Jr. and Dickerson were acquainted is unknown, for Dickerson was assigned to the sixth district (South Carolina and Georgia). It is possible that James Sr. may have met Dickerson in 1880, if he was the same Jacob James who traveled from Santo Domingo to the U.S., although he probably met him months after his arrival. In 1880, James arrived in the United States on April 28, and Dickerson was in St. Louis May 3-24 for the 1880 General Conference, where he was elected bishop. See Dennis Dickerson, “William Fischer Dickerson: Northern Preacher/Southern Prelate,” *Methodist History* 23, no. 3 (1985): 138, 143; “New York, Passenger Lists, 1820-1957,” Year: 1880; Arrival: New York, New York; Microfilm Serial: M237, 1820-1897; Microfilm Roll: Roll 425; Line: 8; List Number: 456, Ancestry.com. [database on-line].


19 Via telephone on September 30, 2012, Beloit College archivist confirmed that James Jr. attended the preparatory academy from 1882-1887 along with other Caribbean students.

20 For example see Frank Andre Guridy, *Forging Diaspora: Afro-Cubans and African Americans in a World of Empire and Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 21.
engineers.\textsuperscript{21} They were a part of “the rising generation,” that knew the “maxims and ways of [the Dominican Republic],” but also understood themselves as part of the Negro race, connected to other black people in the Caribbean and the United States.\textsuperscript{22} Such students primarily joined African-Americans institutions, such as Booker T. Washington’s Tuskegee Institute or the AME Church’s Wilberforce College, where they became engulfed in contemporary debates about the place of African-Americans in the nation. Experiencing Jim Crow America as black foreigners, many of them traveled back to their countries empowered by ideas of racial equality and uplift. Others never finished their studies and returned disappointed with their experiences in the United States. Still others, like Jacob Paul, stayed in the United States upon graduation. In many ways, these Afro-Caribbean men and the educational institutions that they frequented in the 1880s, “laid the foundation for Afro-diasporic interaction,” between African-Americans and Afro-Caribbeans in the decades to come.\textsuperscript{23}

While at Beloit, James Jr. joined the AME Church under Rev. Woods, who mentored him in the discipline of the church. Woods’s own life trajectory was most likely an inspiration to James Jr. Born a slave in Missouri in 1859, Wood worked in a tobacco factory after the Civil War. There he met Rev. T.W. Henderson of the AME

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{22} Commission of Inquiry, “Report.
\bibitem{23} Guridy, Forging Diaspora, 20.
\end{thebibliography}
Church, who taught night classes that Wood attended. Three years after learning to read and write at the age of fourteen, Wood became a member of the AME Church. He was subsequently licensed to preach and in 1879, he took charge of the small congregation in Beloit, Wisconsin, where he studied during his three years of pastoring there. Ultimately Woods would go on to study theology at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, becoming “one of the best scholars and ablest preachers of his denomination in the west.” Yet, in 1882, the twenty-two year old Wood was still a student and minister in Beloit, and he took in James Jr. (who was two years his senior), training him to one day take his place.

James Jr.’s first years as an AME minister closely mirrored Rev. Woods’s trajectory, and his time in Wisconsin enabled him to become a part of the AME Church’s Iowa Conference. Like Woods, James Jr. earned his preaching license three years after joining the AME Church. He then received the ordination of deacon in 1887, and was subsequently appointed to the Beloit mission church where he served for three years until 1890. After Beloit, James Jr. was appointed to Minneapolis, where he served from 1890 to 1891. During that time, he received his second ordination as elder (full pastor) in the AME Church. Then, between 1891 and 1899, James Jr. pastored various churches in the U.S. Midwest: Albia, Iowa (one year, 1892); Clarinda, Iowa (one and a half years,

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24 After Beloit, Wood was appointed to Evanston, Illinois, so he was also a pastor at the same time that he studied at Northwestern. “Sketches of Delegates,” *Christian Recorder*, April 16, 1896.
1893-94); Princeton, Illinois (two years, 1895-96); Knoxville, Illinois (one year 1897); and Racine, Wisconsin (one year, 1898). These positions enabled James Jr. to gain leadership experience and make friends among many rural African American communities in the U.S. Midwest, but they also exposed him to prejudice.

As a man of very dark complexion, James Jr. experienced the constant threat of racist discrimination within the American society. While James Jr. never wrote of the discrimination he faced, it was an inevitable fact of life for a man of his color and position. Since the Civil War, all of the small rural towns where James Jr. pastored in the Midwest had experienced substantial increases in their black populations as ex-slaves migrated north. Unlike the major cities, however, the black population in these places rarely increased above one thousand. Northern whites—liberals who had previously supported abolition—were unaccustomed to seeing blacks on their streets and balked at the idea of hundreds of black people living in their towns. As the black population rose, racial violence and race riots across the Midwest also surged. African-Americans responded to white violence and negative portrayals of blacks in white newspapers with counter articles in the black press, public protests, and organization in mutual aid.

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societies and black churches. The hub of African-American society in the
the aforementioned Midwestern towns, James Jr.’s AME congregations played a
fundamental role in supporting such responses to racism and helped to forge a sense of
African-American identity among a group of people who otherwise represented a
disparate group of migrants. James Jr. thus lived during a time when black religious
and secular networks across the U.S. were beginning to strengthen in response to rising
violence against African-Americans in the United States. His work as an AME minister
meant that he was at the center of black life and black political organization—and the
potential target of racial discrimination—wherever he went.

While James Jr. constantly faced the threat of racial violence from whites, it is
important to note that he may have also faced discrimination within the AME Church. It
is strange, for example, that despite the similarities in James Jr. and Woods’s
professional trajectories, James Jr. never rose to the stature of Woods and other famed
AME contemporaries from the Midwest. Nor was he ever appointed pastor over a large
cosmopolitan church. While there are no clearly stated reasons for James Jr.’s failure to
advance within the AME Church, discrimination is a possible explanation. It is likely

27 Other organizations, such as mutual aid societies and charity clubs, also helped to create a network of
black associations that linked small towns to large cities like Chicago, Washington D.C., Philadelphia, and
New York.
Blocker Jr., “Building Networks: Cooperation and Communication Among African Americans in the Urban
that James Jr.’s color, poverty, and lack of continued education held him back from assuming more senior positions within the Iowa circuit. It is additionally possible that James Jr.’s evident reticence on racial issues maintained his low profile among AME preachers. After all, black unity against white violence did not always signify uniformity in the black experience, nor did it always motivate black leaders to speak out.

Whatever the case, James Jr. never became a famous leader within the AME Church or African American society more broadly. Consequently, most of his personal history and records of his time in the United States have been lost to time. What is known, however, is that James Jr. used both his social connections in the Northeast as a pathway to ministry in the U.S. Midwest. Like Henry C.C. Astwood, James Jr.’s tenure in the United States would enable him to establish the AME Church on the island of his birth.

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In the fall of 1898, Rev. James Jr. traveled with his wife of four years, Sophia Swan from the Turks Islands, to Ebenezer AME church in Evanston, Illinois, “a beautifully little suburb of Chicago,” for the Iowa Annual Conference.29 The Conference opened on September 7th at 11 AM with a devotional service led by Bishop Arnett who

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after finishing his sermon invited Rev. James Jr. to take his seat at the front of the
church. As Conference Secretary for the last two years, Rev. James Jr. was responsible
for the roll call. This job, although seemingly insignificant, opened the business session
of the conference and established the numerical quorum for all votes and elections.

James Jr. began by naming each conference member by order of rank, starting with the
Bishop and ending with the last elected lay leader. As each member stood to announce
his presence, James Jr. marked a check next to the name. When James Jr. marked the
final name, he turned towards the bishop and stated that the roll call had been
completed and that a majority was present. The bishop then stood and the elections for
conference positions began. For a third time, James Jr. was elected the Conference
Secretary, along with W.A. Bruce and J.C. Anderson. The conference also elected two
marshals, two reporters, and one postmaster: the conference host and pastor of
Ebenezer, Dr. L.M. Fenwick. Thus began the Iowa Annual Conference of 1898, a moment
in time that would define the course of Protestant history on a Caribbean island
thousands of miles away.

Over the next five days, black clergymen from all over the Midwestern United
States convened daily in the small town, where African-Americans made up less than
four percent of the population and where the Methodist Episcopal Church’s

Iowa State Bystander, September 16, 1898.
Northwestern University provided an environment of like-minded religious folk despite prevailing racial tensions.\(^{31}\) Free time was spent socializing, eating, and catching up on sleep. There was plenty of the former, and not so much of the later since each afternoon business session was followed by a night of devotional services that included a mix of hymns, anthems, lectures, and sermons. The fact that a number of notable figures, including a few local white Methodists, visited the conference also made socializing a top priority for eager clergymen and local leaders. Among the visitors were T.W. Henderson, the manager of the AME Book Concern; Dr. M. M. More, the Financial Secretary of the AME Church; AME Bishop Gaines and his daughter; Professor Geo F. Woodson, the Secretary of Payne Theological Seminary; C.S. Smith, Bishop Arnett’s assistant and a professor of Wilberforce; and a number of Norwegian and Danish clergymen from the Methodist Episcopal Conference. The current Missionary Secretary of the AME church, Henry Blanton Parks, was also present. Bishop Arnett presented each of these leaders to the conference on the first day, and allotted time to Henderson and Parks to present their work.\(^{32}\)


While reports of the conference mention a number of emotion-rousing sermons, James Jr. must have been particularly interested to hear Parks’s speech on the missionary work of the church. In 1898, the Caribbean region still made up the bulk of AME foreign missions, and during the Iowa Conference Parks specifically discussed the church’s latest endeavor on the Spanish island of Cuba. On May 27, 1898, roughly a month after the United States began a blockade of Cuba that initiated the Spanish-American War on April 21, the Bishops of the AME church convened for their annual meeting in Philadelphia. Together they “felt inspired of God to send a missionary of the Cross to the people of outraged and priest ridden Cuba, [along] with Shafter’s Army.” Consequently, they had chosen Henry C. C. Astwood to lead the church in Cuba; his experiences in Santo Domingo were fondly remembered and the damaging lawsuit was unknown or at least seemed to be completely forgotten.34 Parks informed the Iowa Conference that Astwood left for Santiago de Cuba on August 11th, only days after American troops began to evacuate the country. There he met up with the black troops left behind as he began missionary work in Cuba.35 On August 17th, Astwood organized

34 In one article about Cuba missions, the author states that Astwood’s, “great work in San Domingo as a missionary in years past is well known to the Church, and he will yet be further thought of.” See “The Manager’s Weekly Letter. Close of the Philadelphia Conference,” Christian Recorder, June 2, 1898.
the AME church with eleven members, including two local preachers, and the PHFMS supported the young mission with “$75 worth of property, church furniture and...Bibles, tracts, song books, etc.”  

By all measure, the AME church had done well in responding to the “Macedonian cry” in Cuba.

Yet, despite Parks’ praise for Cuban missions—including the erroneous claim that the AME was, “the first Protestant Church organized on the Island of Cuba since the discovery of the island by Columbus,”—he also presented sobering news. If the Cuban mission were to survive, it must receive financial support. According to an appeal from Parks printed in the Christian Recorder two months later on November 3, 1898, rent for the rooms where religious services were held in Santiago cost $25 per month. Traveling expenses were upwards of three hundred dollars, and the congregation needed a building in Santiago. The Bishops also wanted Astwood to travel to other regions of the island and Puerto Rico in order to expand the church’s outreach. “To do this work,” Parks wrote, “we must have at least $10,000.” Since the funds from the Easter Day collection (an offering in every AME church that went directly to the PHFMS) were already budgeted for Africa and other mission fields, Parks had “no means with which to support this work in Cuba, recently thrust upon us.”

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37 Ibid. White American Protestants of the Episcopal Church were active in Cuba as early as 1871. Luis Martínez-Fernández, Protestantism and Political Conflict in the Nineteenth-Century Hispanic Caribbean (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002) 116-133.
desperation in November may not have been apparent in his speech two months earlier, it is almost certain that he asked the Iowa Conference to provide financial aid for Cuba. “The address was so powerful and inspiring,” one Iowa reporter wrote, “that many were moved to tears, a collection of $26.76 was taken up for the Cuban work.”\textsuperscript{39}

As James Jr. listened to Parks describe Astwood’s new endeavors and the PHFMS’s call for financial support of AME missions in Cuba, he must have thought of his home island. Could the same, if not more, be done in the Dominican Republic, a country whose ties to the AME church predated the founding of the Dominican nation? Would the AME church abandon its responsibilities in Santo Domingo for the sake of Cuba and other Caribbean islands? By the time Parks finished his speech, James Jr. undoubtedly felt both convicted and inspired. Who else in the AME church was better equipped than he was to handle the dying mission in Santo Domingo?

It is unknown whether James Jr. or Parks initiated the conversation the two men had about missionary work in the Dominican Republic. It is certain, however, that they did speak. Years later in 1910, James Jr. recalled the 1898 Iowa Conference as the moment when, “that noble Christian man, Rev. H.B. Parks…[asked me] to take charge of our mission church at Santo Domingo City.” James Jr. accepted the position offered in accordance with, “the spirit and principle of the AME Church.”\textsuperscript{40} Thus, despite the fact

\textsuperscript{40} “AME Church Work at Samana, Santo Domingo,” Voice of Missions 18, no. 2, February 1910, p. 6.
that Bishop Arnett appointed James Jr. to the AME church in Monmouth, Illinois at the end of the conference, by mid-January 1899 Rev. Jacob Paul James Jr. and his wife, Sophia, had moved to Santo Domingo to begin their new lives as AME missionaries.

6.2 Two Perspectives on AME Missions

In many ways, Henry Blanton Parks and Jacob Paul James Jr. represented two contrasting opinions about missionary work. Their respective backgrounds shaped their ideas. Parks was part of a group of highly influential African Methodists operating in the United States. This group of leaders—including bishops, General Officers, educators, government officials and famed ministers—were typically educated, middle-class, African-Americans that held top-ranking positions in the AME church. As a General Officer of the AME church, Parks may not have known much about the Dominican Republic, but he had a clear vision of the general state of foreign AME missionary work. James Jr., on the other hand, was a foreign-born, U.S.-educated minister who had not reached national prominence in the AME church but wielded a degree of influence within his regional conference. Having grown up under his father, James Jr. knew more than Parks about the peculiarities of Protestant evangelism in the Dominican Republic. Although they agreed on some points, these two men’s distinct positions meant that each had different priorities concerning missionary work abroad, and their separate viewpoints and experiences foreshadow some of the future challenges that would plague Dominican-based AME congregations.
Born in Georgia on Independence Day in 1859 and educated at Atlanta University, Henry Blanton Parks had worked his way up the AME hierarchy to become the Missionary Secretary in 1896. His thoughts on missionary work not only reflected the general discourse on AME missions in the 1890s, but also helped to shape it. Like others of his time, Parks believed in the “Black Man’s Burden.” Based on Rudyard Kipling’s, “White Man’s Burden,” the Black Man’s Burden purported that African-Americans had a God-given responsibility to civilize all black people throughout the world. Parks and others believed that “the natives must be civilized and Christianized.” He thus used both racial and religious arguments to incite African-Americans in the United States to take up the cause of foreign missions. “No other race can do the work as you can,” Parks wrote to African-Americans in his book *Africa: The Problem of the New Century* (1899). “It is the civilized, educated Negro for the manly, heathen Negro.” Parks saw no alternative course of action for the AME Church whose

responsibility, he believed, was to make sure that foreign blacks were converted to Christianity. “It is YOUR task, YOUR duty, and you should be proud to shoulder it,”45 he exhorted the church. This belief motivated efforts such as the Henry McNeil Turner Crusaders of the Twentieth Century, a society that aimed to raise money for African missions and thereby animate “a great wave of better race feeling.”46 It also enabled Parks to dismiss arguments that money was needed for domestic missionary work. To such an idea, he rebuffed, “Selfish Christianity doesn’t deserve the name.” Foreign missionary work in the AME church was thus a matter of religious fervor and racial uplift, two sentiments that fueled AME rhetoric in the United States and the church’s missionary action abroad.

But by the mid-1890s African-American AME leaders were more concerned about blacks in Africa than AME missionary work in the Caribbean. This transition was marked by a shift in the PHFMS’s financial priorities. For example, in its 1897-1898 annual report, the PHFMS allotted almost twice as much money for the next year’s missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone than its Caribbean congregations in Haiti and Santo Domingo.47 Due to the fact that missionaries from one island often set up outposts in other islands, some Caribbean territories even had to share resources. For example,

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45 Ibid.
46 Ibid., 51. Each eligible man was to pray daily for African missions, exhort others to join the Crusade, and donate half a day’s earnings every quarter to the PHFMS.
British Guiana and Barbados were to share a budget of $1200. Cuba and Puerto Rico were allotted $1000. While it may be argued that the unbalanced distribution reflected the fact that the African congregations had more members than Caribbean congregations, this is only true in certain cases. For the 1897-1898 fiscal year, the Liberia Conference reported 214 members while British Guiana reported 200. Membership statistics for Haiti and the Dominican Republic were not recorded in the annual report, but it is likely that numbers were much less than 200. Still, Haiti and the Dominican Republic were allotted the same amount ($1200) as British Guiana for the next fiscal year. It can therefore be argued that the PHFMS distributed funds to foreign lands based on the priority each region held within the purview of African Methodist and African-American politics. In 1897-1898, the order was Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Haiti, San Domingo, Barbados and British Guiana, Cuba and Puerto Rico, Ontario and Nova Scotia, and Bermuda.\textsuperscript{48} Africa was the central focus of the church, even though the denomination had a larger following in the Caribbean.

During his tenure as Missionary Secretary, Parks was one of the leading advocates for African missions, and his focus on Africa directed the PHFMS’s priorities. As the editor of the \textit{Voice of Missions}, he published more articles on missions in West and South Africa than any other region. He also directed the finances of the church towards

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
Africa. For example, in 1898-1899, the PHFMS raised $16,301.55. This amount was supposed to fund the church’s twelve missionary areas as well as its domestic responsibilities and the costs of running the missionary house and journal in New York. In an appeal that did not correspond to the department’s financial ability, Parks called for one-third of the 1899 Easter Day returns ($3,421.08 out of $10,263.23), a sizable portion of the 1898-1899 earnings, to be dedicated to Queenstown College in South Africa. This amount could not be distributed to South Africa without detriment to the other missionary areas. The fact that Parks would appeal to the church for such a sum, however, demonstrates the importance that he placed on African missions.

Parks’s focus on Africa reflected the broader politics of the AME Church, and demonstrates that AME church leaders in the U.S. knew little about the state of the Santo Domingo AME congregation in 1898. Parks himself probably did not have more than a cursory understanding of the church’s history in the Dominican Republic. It is likely that Parks’s knowledge of the AME church on the island came directly from Astwood’s writings and speeches. For example, in February 1898, Parks attended the Philadelphia Preacher’s Association, where Astwood gave, “an interesting and instructive lecture on ‘the Negro in Hayti and Santo Domingo,’” that was based on Astwood’s personal experiences on the island. Although what Astwood said exactly is not known, Parks’s

49 Parks, Africa: The Problem of the New Century, 41.
50 “The Philadelphia Preacher’s Association was entertained by Rev.[MISSING WORD?]” Christian Recorder, February 3, 1898.
subsequent chapter on missionary history in *Africa: The Problem of the New Century*
follows the same storyline as Astwood’s defense in front of the Dominican judiciary in 1890. The chapter also focuses almost exclusively on the Dominican Republic instead of Haiti. This point-of-view corresponds to Astwood’s experiences on the island, and the fact that Parks misquoted names and dates in the chapter further supports the hypothesis that he gained information about Santo Domingo second-hand and perhaps orally. It is therefore most likely that Parks knew very little about the Dominican Republic. He could therefore not offer James Jr. meaningful advice on what the challenges would be in the Dominican Republic and how James Jr. should go about his work on the island.

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Unlike Parks and other African-American leaders born in the U.S., Jacob P. James Jr. wrote more specifically about AME missionary work in the Dominican Republic. His perspective was shaped by his experiences growing up in Samaná, where James Jr. had watched his father maintain contact with the group of Protestants living in the capital. Unlike in Samaná and Puerto Plata, the Wesleyans did not ventured to the southern regions of the island for most of the nineteenth century, and the African-American descendants in the capital went years without a Protestant pastor.\(^{51}\)

\(^{51}\) In the 1890s, after the lawsuit with Astwood, Charles E. Goodin aligned himself with the Wesleyan Missionary Society and led a congregation of Protestants in the capital. He continued as a representative of the Wesleyan Missionary Society in the capital during the first decades of the twentieth century.

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Sr. advocated on behalf of the African-American community in Santo Domingo. He pleaded with the Wesleyan Missionary Society to send a pastor there. He also corresponded with Elijah Gross, the leader of the emigrant community in Santo Domingo, and reported back to the missionary society on the state of the congregation. On a number of occasions, James Sr. traveled to the capital and visited the congregation. He then brought back news to Samaná of their poor situation. James Sr.’s yearly contact with the Protestants in the capital familiarized James Jr. with the troubles that they faced.

Perhaps because of his father’s connection with this group, James Jr. visited the capital during a trip back to the island in 1893.52 His ideas about missionary work in the capital were further shaped by this trip. It was his second journey to the island since he pursued his education in the United States, and the reunion with his family and friends in Samaná was supposed to be a joyous occasion. The state of the AME Church in the capital, however, caused him deep regret. “So far little good has been accomplished by

52 The racial climate, the demands of his pastoral work within rural neighborhoods, and the distance between the U.S. Midwest and the Caribbean limited James’ opportunities to travel home to Samaná during his time in the U.S. These factors, however, did not deter him from visiting the island at least twice in the eighteen years between 1881 and 1899. His first trip took place in 1891. Ship Records indicate that James left Santo Domingo for Minnesota, where he was pastoring an AME Church. See “New York, Passenger Lists, 1820-1957,” Year: 1891; Arrival: New York, New York; Microfilm Serial: M237, 1820-1897; Microfilm Roll: Roll 562; Line: 5; List Number: 256, Ancestry.com [database on-line]. On his second trip, Jacob P. James Jr. traveled with two youngsters, Jacob James Jr. and Frank James, ages 13 and 16. It is popularly known that Jacob Paul James Jr. did not have children. These young men most likely were relatives traveling with James to the U.S. to pursue education. See “New York, Passenger Lists, 1820-1957,” Year: 1893; Arrival: New York, New York; Microfilm Serial: M237, 1820-1897; Microfilm Roll: Roll 611; Line: 5, Ancestry.com [database on-line].
the AME Church in San Domingo,” wrote James Jr. to the church’s newspaper, the Christian Recorder, upon his return to Minneapolis. He noted that the church was organized “under favorable circumstances,” but the embarrassing internal conflict had injured the African Methodists’ reputation among their Spanish-speaking neighbors and patrons. The home church had not aided the congregation financially and, “by commencing [missions] and then failing,” the AME church had given, “the [Catholic Church] a plausible handle to persecute [it].” Moreover, a number of AME members had migrated to other places, and the country suffered from economic depression and political instability. Reporting to the AME newspaper, the Christian Recorder, he warned AME leaders in the U.S. that, “unless the home church could send a missionary out here and properly support him, it would be unwise to keep it.”

Despite the dismal outlook of the AME Church’s state in the country in 1893, James Jr. still believed that the church could make headway in the Dominican Republic, particularly in “other centers on the Island where our church might be established with less difficulty than at the city of San Domingo.”

Most likely James Jr. was thinking of Samaná when he wrote these words. As a descendant of African-American immigrants, James Jr. knew that the AME church was the denomination that had helped thousands of black free people to migrate to Haiti, and he believed that this fact would help gain

53 “News of the Week,” Christian Recorder, June 1, 1893.
54 Ibid.
the church members in Samaná because the history of the AME church’s involvement with the Haitian Emigration Movement was at the foundation of how immigrant descendants thought about themselves and their place in the Dominican nation. Many descendants perceived the AME church as the "Church of their forefathers, who were the first to bring the Gospel to the Dominican Republic."\textsuperscript{55} This status as the “first Protestants” on the island helped descendants, such as Gross and Hamilton in Santo Domingo, to lay claim to Dominican citizenship (Chapter 4). Others used the story as one way to distinguish themselves ethnically and culturally from Dominicans (as was the case of James Sr. in Samaná). In either case, James Jr. believed that this history would make the AME church an obvious choice for the immigrant descendants on the island.

James Jr. did not limit himself, however, to the African-American population, but also imagined evangelizing to the broader Dominican population. To spread the church in the country, James Jr. urged church leaders in the U.S. to, “look well into [the field] before entering, and then enter with a determination to win.”\textsuperscript{56} He believed that the Catholic Church was the main barrier to Protestant work in the capital and the country at large. The Catholic Church historically opposed the presence of the Protestantism, despite local residents’ general acceptance of the Protestant church in their midst. The


\textsuperscript{56} “News of the Week,” \textit{Christian Recorder}, June 1, 1893.
poverty of the Santo Domingo AME congregation and the political instability of the
country also worked against greater church growth. To “enter with the determination to
win,” therefore meant that the AME church had to provide enough financial assistance
to missionaries so that they could compete with the Catholic Church. They additionally
had to offer potential converts the same social services that the Catholic Church offered.
It also meant that the AME Church should consider the cultural nuances of the
Dominican people—their Catholic practices, their Spanish language, and their
perspectives on the black republic of Haiti along with their general aversion to
discussing race in the public sphere.

This last factor was evident both among the general Dominican population and
African-American descendants living on the island, and was a stark distinction from
racial politics among African-Americans in the United States. Unlike African-Americans
in the U.S., African-American immigrant descendants in the Dominican Republic did
not always explicitly address racial issues. Discourses of racial uplift and African-
Americans’ role as civilizer gave way to subtle hints of race consciousness. James Jr.’s
writings about missionary work exemplify this difference. As a black man and a
minister in the AME Church, James Jr. was familiar with U.S. racism and African-
Americans’ ideas of racial uplift. He was, however, remarkably reserved when it came to
racial issues on the island. In his 1893 report, he did not discuss race or the fact that a
"black man" (Ulises Heureaux) was the president. Instead, James Jr. wrote to the PHFMS
about other challenges he faced in Santo Domingo: wars, poverty, and the Catholic Church. This became a tendency in James Jr.'s writings in later years of his ministry. Nevertheless, James Jr. did personally endorse the doctrine of racial uplift. Indeed, years later in 1920, a traveler noted that James Jr.’s personal library included books such as *Negro Aspirations* (no date) and Booker T. Washington’s autobiography *Up From Slavery* (1901). He also remained a minister in the AME Church for over thirty years, never defecting to a white denomination such as the British Wesleyans or the American Methodist Episcopal churches. What then can explain his public neglect of the topic? One explanation for James Jr.’s attitude towards race may be his background growing up in Samaná. Aware of his precarious position as a black Protestant from the Dominican Republic, James Jr. most likely followed local convention in the Dominican Republic and carefully avoided writing about race and politics.

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57 Harry A. Franck, *Roaming Through the West Indies* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1920), 219. I have not been able to find bibliographic information on *Negro Aspirations*.

58 It is true that James Jr. never defected, but he may have considered leaving the AME Church for the Wesleyan Church. In 1922, a year before his death, the Wesleyan Church asked James Jr. to join its denomination. It was reported that, “The AME Mission Board does nothing for him so that he scarcely meets expenses. He is quite willing to come over to us.” Rev. Solomon to Mr. Burnett. 23 March 1922. *Methodist Missionary Society Archives*. Microfiche. General Commission on Archives and History, United Methodist Church.

James Jr.’s reluctance to write about race corresponds to the *vaivén* (coming and going) of blackness that scholars have observed in other Latin American societies.\(^60\) Blackness is a “moving target,” that is “simultaneously segmented, denied, and reluctantly embraced—all while morphing into something that seemingly stretches beyond blackness.”\(^61\) From James Jr.’s writings and the very few documented instances when immigrant descendants used blackness as an identifying characteristic, it can be determined that immigrant descendants did not think about the AME church and its missionary work on the island in the same way that African-Americans in the United States did. Some acknowledged their blackness and found in it a source a pride. Others, did not deny it outright, but found it distasteful to discuss. While there is little doubt that descendants within the AME church in the Dominican Republic believed that they were racially and ethnically linked to African-Americans, it is also true that most immigrant descendants did not habitually vocalize their opinions about race. The *vaivén* of racial language in documents thus demonstrates one way that immigrant descendants were perhaps more culturally adapted to the social reality and local customs of the

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Dominican Republic than they were familiar with African-American racial discourses and practices.

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The tension between U.S.-based AME leaders’ plans for foreign missionary work—ideas that were steeped in African-Americans’ discourse of racial uplift—and the local social atmosphere in the Dominican Republic would in time become a major stumbling block for AME work in the Dominican Republic. But in the first years of the twentieth century, the lack of financial planning along with the church’s focus on Africa were the main issues that inhibited the AME Church’s growth in Santo Domingo.

As an African-American institution, the AME Church’s finances reflected the relatively impoverished condition of its approximately 700,000 members at the end of the nineteenth century. The church had no endowment and the PHFMS barely sustained itself from year-to-year. Despite this financial state, the church did not reign in its missionary endeavors. The PHFMS instead continued to expand to new regions, dividing its budget between multiple territories and thus hindering the denomination’s impact abroad. For example, the budget for the 1898-1899 fiscal year was estimated at $11,750 with only $4,496.91 on hand on June 1, 1898. While the PHFMS brought in $11,967.35 over the 1897-1898 fiscal year and did not spend above its means that year, the sum appropriated for 1898-1899 could not adequately support the PHFMS’s many domestic and foreign activities. In 1898-1899, the PHFMS raised $4334.20 more than the
preceding year, but it also spent more money ($16,915.90) than it raised ($16,301.55).\footnote{Parks, \textit{Annual Report}, 17.} This pattern of overspending was a key characteristic of the PHFMS in the first decades of the twentieth century, and it is the reason why leaders such as Parks frequently made appeals to the broader church for more funds.

The pathos imbued in such appeals for financial aid reveals that Parks and other leaders were not ignorant of the effects that the PHFMS’s poverty had on missionaries working abroad. Often, letters from missionaries were published along with the PHFMS’s petitions for money. In February 1898, for example, the \textit{Christian Recorder} published a letter sent to Parks from Solomon G. Dorce (who had become the AME presiding elder in Haiti) along with a longer accompanying article Parks wrote to the newspaper.\footnote{“Important Missionary Communication,” \textit{Christian Recorder}, February 3, 1898.} In his article, Parks confessed that he never understood the poverty that foreign missionaries faced until he began to read letters from the field that arrived daily at the PHFMS. “At times,” he explains, they “have had to feed a wife and children on fifty cents a week.” He continued, “In some instances, they have had to let their families suffer of remedial attention on account of poverty, and in many instances they have been forced to wear one suit of clothing for three years consecutively.” Parks then critiqued the American church for its complacency. “One cannot write of our Mission work without feeling humiliated at the scanty support given to those who are engaged
in carrying forward the cause, and the seeming cold indifference with which some are pleased to look upon the work that God has commanded us to perform.” With his words, Parks underscored the fact that missionaries working in foreign fields suffered much more than AME ministers in the United States. Knowledge of this fact was supposed to motivate charity towards the PHFMS. Such charity, however, did not always go directly to the missionaries living abroad. Instead, it was directed towards the PHFMS’s annual budget. The Missionary Board then designated funds according to the perceived needs of the department.

Thus, despite Parks’ awareness of the hardships missionaries faced, as a whole the PHFMS and the broader AME Church in the United States did not always take steps to alleviate the on-the-ground issues that missionaries faced. The PHFMS’s poverty compounded with the rhetoric of racial uplift and the ”Black Man’s Burden” cultivated an environment in which AME leaders like Parks acknowledged the challenges of missionary work, but did little to actually address them or to rethink their outreach model. For example, in his letter, Dorce informed Parks that, ”A visit from the General Secretary of Missions and a bishop would do an immense good to the work.” While Parks made plans to visit Haiti in early February, there is no evidence in AME

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64 Parks claimed that, “the comparatively light burden that many of us in the States have to bare are not to be compared with those of our foreign brethren.” “Important Missionary Communication,” Christian Recorder, February 3, 1898.
newspapers that he actually went.65 Parks’ and other African-American AME leaders’ comments about cultural barriers in the Caribbean provide another example. When it came to spreading Protestant religion in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, Parks recognized that AME missionaries were considered “enemies to the Holy Catholic religion,” and consequently had “many hardships to endure while striving to build up the AME Church” in these countries. However, the AME Church had no written strategy or special budget directed towards missions in Catholic nations. Nor, were there any debates about Catholicism versus Protestantism printed in the Voice of Missions or the Christian Recorder. It thus seems that the Catholic Church and the problems that missionaries faced in predominately Catholic countries was simply not a main concern for African-Americans in the United States, who were much more focused on converting the black “heathen” in Africa than the black Catholic in the West Indies.

The financial state of the PHFMS and its underdeveloped strategy for foreign missions in Catholic territories would cause major problems for the church in the Dominican Republic. It is unclear, however, whether James Jr. foresaw these issues as he prepared to leave the United States in January 1899. Headed for the Dominican capital, James Jr.’s mission was to first take charge of the congregation that had dissolved under Astwood’s leadership. He then planned to grow the church as best he could, working in

65 Parks may have canceled his plans because Dorce was intending to tour the West Indians, South American, and Central America, but I have yet to find evidence that Parks rescheduled the trip or sent a bishop to Haiti in his stead.
English and Spanish among the poor black population of the city. With his prior experiences on the island and sixteen years in the United States, James Jr. was uniquely prepared for the work. He was less prepared, however, for the difficulties that awaited him in Santo Domingo.

6.3 *The AME Church in the Dominican Republic 1899-1904*

On the evening of December 25th, 1899 Bethel AME church in Santo Domingo was, “crowded to its utmost capacity with a large audience.” The “old and young…those that could understand the English language and…those who could speak only Spanish,” flocked to the congregation’s Christmas concert.66 This was the second night of the concert, and the 7:30pm service culminated two days full of prayers, sermons, Sunday School meetings, scripture recitation, and song. The songs, perhaps more than anything else, were what drew the crowd that night. It is likely that neighbors had heard the singing from the previous evening as they walked home from Christmas Eve mass, and word had spread that the Protestant concert would be given again on Christmas Day. The choir featured choruses, duets and solos. One can imagine that the songs included a variety of Methodist hymns, and perhaps a spiritual or two passed on from the first generation of immigrants or taught to the congregation by their new pastor, Rev. Jacob James Jr. The choir even interspersed a few instructive skits

(dialogues) with the music before the time came for Earl T. Maxwell’s address, which was followed by remarks from Rev. James Jr.

James Jr. must have felt proud to see the little chapel filled with old and new faces that night as he spoke of the significance of Jesus’s birth and reflected on the past year. This time a year ago he and Sophia were still living in Illinois, and if they had remained in the United States they would have fought the cold and snowy weather to host a Christmas tree service in the western town of Monmouth. Yet, here they were in tropical Santo Domingo! They had arrived mid-January 1899 to find that “our church work [in the capital]...had gone completely down.” Indeed, the church had been closed for nearly two years. The building was in disrepair and only eight people, including the local preacher, Brother Adam Rogers, were members of the AME Church. Despite this bleak outlook and rumors that the AME Church in the U.S. had abandoned its connection in the Dominican Republic, Jacob and Sophia began a Sunday School. By early July they had repaired the church building and had a membership of over fifty

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68 Ibid. James’s observations coincided with those of the Secretary of the AME Sunday School Union in 1896, Rev. Charles Spencer Smith, who later became a bishop in the AME Church. See “A Trip to the West Indies,” Christian Recorder, March 5, 1896.
69 “AME Church Work at Samana, Santo Domingo,” 6. James does not specify who the local preacher was, but it was mostly likely Rogers because Parks lists him as leading the Santo Domingo mission in 1898. See “Important Missionary Communication,” Christian Recorder, February 3, 1898. Rogers had worked in the Dominican Republic for years. Under Astwood he was the local preacher in Barahona. See “Missionary (Read! Easter Day, Appeal)” Christian Recorder, April 3, 1890.
70 The school was organized the first Sunday of February 1899. See “Resolutions of a Greeting,” Christian Recorder, September 14, 1899.
newcomers.71 The Sunday School committee, made up of AME members Joseph H. McKay, Mardalen Beech, and Earl F. Maxwell, described the developments in a letter sent to the AME church in the United States in July. “Our school was organized…with less than a dozen members; to-day we have forty-five members, a superintendent, secretary and five teachers, all under the prayerful and watchful care of our beloved pastor,” they wrote.72 These developments indicated to James Jr. that the AME church would be able to make a comeback in the capital, and he undoubtedly felt relieved by the transformation. Perhaps inspired by the progress, he culminated the year with a special gift for his new congregation: their very first Christmas tree service conducted in the style of the AME Church in the United States. “Delighted with [the] efforts to entertain the little ones,” the adults were generous in their donations that night, and the church received an offering of twenty-five pesos.73 It was a promising end to a year filled with surprises—both good and bad.

1899 had brought a number of changes and challenges for Jacob and Sophia. Besides the move and the growing congregation, they had witnessed the Dominican nation’s political system crumble over the course of months. It is unknown whether or not the James family supported Ulises Heureaux, who was president when they arrived in January 1899, but they were living in the capital when Heureaux was fatally shot by

71 “AME Church Work at Samana, Santo Domingo,” 6.
Jacobo de Lara and Ramón Cáceres on July 26 while he was traveling through Moca in the northwestern Cibao valley region of the country.74 The aftermath of Heureaux’s death lead to a revolution, with fighting between Heureaux’s supporters (lilistas) and those who supported Horatio Vásquez (horacista), a military general and Ramón Cáceres’s cousin. The horacistas, with support from the Cibao, caused the lilistas to retreat. By September, 1899 Vásquez was named the provisional president, and on September 4th, 1899, Vásquez and Cáceres marched down the principal street of the capital, El Conde, in celebration of their victory.75 It is likely that James Jr., Sophia, and other members of the AME church witnessed this parade. Nestled within the colonial zone of the capital city, the small Protestant congregation could not escape the growing political unrest that ravaged the nation.

While the changing political tide disturbed life in the capital, a local crisis was forming in James Jr.’s hometown of Samaná, where his father remained the local preacher. According to oral history, the governor of Samaná, Moisés Alejandro Anderson—who was popularly known as Macabón—was a descendant of the African-American community, a powerful man within St. Peter’s, and a loyal adherent of Ulises Heureaux. He taxed the members of the church for repairs that needed to be made on

74 For a detailed account of the events see Luis F. Mejía, De Lilís a Trujillo, 4th ed. (Santo Domingo: Banreservas-Bibliófilos, 2011) 30.
75 Frank Moya Pons, The Dominican Republic: A National History (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2010), 280; Mejía, De Lilís a Trujillo, 36-37. Mejía states that the date of the parade was September 5, 1899.
the church building, and when they refused to pay he put them in jail.\textsuperscript{76} Reports of this scheme reached the ears of the Wesleyan’s West Indies Conference administrator, Rev. Picot, who did nothing to investigate the situation.\textsuperscript{77} Consequently, some of the members reached out to James Jr. They had heard of his work in the capital, and they asked him to come home to start the AME church in Samaná. It is unknown whether or not they informed James Jr. of the situation in St. Peter’s Wesleyan Church, but James Jr. accepted the offer. He was needed in the capital, but the chance to work among people in his hometown had always been his goal.\textsuperscript{78} It is likely that James Jr. counseled the petitioners to form a society in the name of the church, promising that he would visit as soon as possible to receive the group into the AME connection. On October 10, 1899 fifteen men and eight women founded Bethel AME Church in Samaná.\textsuperscript{79} The founding of the AME congregation in Samaná, only nine months after James Jr.’s arrival in Santo

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Willmore, “Esbozo histórico,” 266; Davis, “Asentamiento y vida económica,” 721. For more folklore about Anderson see: Luis Eduardo Bourget, Macabón: Estampas de Samaná (Santo Domingo: unknown, n.d.).
\item Margaret Mears to Mr. Andrews, 24 July 1915. Methodist Missionary Society Archives. Microfiche. General Commission on Archives and History, United Methodist Church.
\item Leticia Willmore’s and Nehemiah Willmore’s versions of James Jr.’s return differ. Leticia states that he refused to establish the church in Samaná until the people organized their own AME Church (721). Nehemiah states that Jacob returned to Samaná at an earlier date to take over St. Peter’s from his father, and the people rejected him based on his race. “Many of them said that they didn’t want any more black James” (264). My depiction of the story here reflects my interpretation of James Jr.’s 1893 letter and the 1899 preamble (see below). From the 1893 letter as well as James Jr.’s biography, it is probable that James Jr. always intended to take over the work of his father. Establishing the AME Church was one way that he could achieve this goal without joining the Wesleyan Church, which had denied him an education.
\item The preamble of the church’s constitution, which lists the men and women who founded the church has been lost and is no longer available in Bethel AME church’s records in Samaná. The preamble is reprinted in two places. Wright, History of the Sixteenth Episcopal District, 27; Lockward, El protestantismo, 284-285.
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Domingo, instigated a period of slow albeit steady growth for the AME denomination in the Dominican Republic.

The establishment of the AME Church in Samaná, however, was not without its controversy. As expected, the AME congregation drew even more members away from the Wesleyan mission. Some members in the community were grateful for the change. Others, especially the Wesleyan minister in Puerto Plata, Mr. Mears, and his wife Margaret, viewed the AME Church as a disruption to the unity that the Samaná Americans had previously enjoyed in the Wesleyan Church.\(^80\) They believed that James Jr. and other members who had abandoned the Wesleyan Church had taken advantage of the rift within the close-knit society. Moreover, James Jr. and the AME Church that he represented challenged both the racial status quo and the religious authority of the Wesleyan Church. As a fully ordained pastor, James Jr. had achieved a status that no black man from the Samaná had ever reached.\(^81\) Yet, he had done so by leaving his Wesleyan roots and his father’s church, and submitting himself to an American institution. Thus, in many ways, the AME church represented a black foreign presence in a region that had been under white British ecclesiastical jurisdiction for decades.

The competition between the AME and Wesleyan churches in Samaná reflected a broader trend in the Caribbean, where U.S. political and economic forces were gradually

\(^{80}\) Margaret Mears to Mr. Andrews, 24 July 1915.  
\(^{81}\) While James Sr. was ordained, his ordination was not at the same level as James Jr.
usurping European influences. In the Dominican Republic alone, the U.S. had made considerable strides in control over the government’s finances under Heureaux’s government. During his second term, Heureaux made a number of economic deals with European powers that greatly indebted the nation. Between 1888 and 1892, Heureaux accepted multiple loans from the Westendorp & Company of Amsterdam, which he used to pay off his supporters and arm the military. The Dutch company, in turn, gained control over the Dominican Republic’s customs revenues. Dutch agents administered the revenues first by deducting the portion of the money allocated for loan repayment and then paying the Dominican government the remainder. This process came under U.S. control when, in 1893, the bankrupt Westendorp Company took advantage of Heureaux’s negotiations with the U.S. government to lease the bay and peninsula of Samaná, and sold its interests to the San Domingo Improvement Company made up of U.S. capitalists and government officials. The owners of the Improvement Company believed that they would accrue great wealth once the Samaná bay was leased to the U.S., but instead Heureaux allowed the Improvement Company to take over Westendorp’s interests with the condition that they agree to pay additional loans totally $1,250,000 U.S. dollars and $2,035,000 pounds. These loans provided Heureaux with the capital he needed to stay in power, but they also further indebted the Dominican Republic to an American company, which also took over the customs revenues. In 1893,
the national debt was 17 million pesos, “a sum several times the national budget.” This trend continued for the following years, and by the time of Heureaux’s death in 1899 the country was in financial ruin and deeply indebted to U.S. business.

At the same time that the Improvement Company came into direct control over the Dominican government’s finances, the Dominican economy also came under American dominance as sugar plantations in the southeast usurped the influence of peasant-manufactured tobacco. In the nineteenth century, tobacco from the Cibao was an important cash crop grown by the Dominican peasantry and exported to Germany and other European countries. European businessmen in turn carefully guarded their interests in the Dominican Republic, and even forced Heureaux to back out of a trade agreement with the U.S. in 1891. Despite its historical influence, however, the tobacco industry remained a non-capitalist industry as Dominicans, Cuban migrants, and American businessmen all invested in sugar production in the 1870s-1890s. Over the decades, Americans then came to monopolize sugar plantations in the Dominican

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82 Moya Pons, *Dominican Republic*, 271.17/4/17 14:37:00
84 This trade agreement would have allowed twenty-six U.S. manufactured articles to enter the Dominican Republic duty-free. Dominican products and raw materials would also enter the U.S. duty free. The treaty was signed, but not put into effect because of protests from Germany, France, Italy, and Holland. Moya Pons, *Dominican Republic*, 269-270.
southeast, especially after the international sugar crash of 1884.\textsuperscript{86} By the 1890s, New York broker firms controlled the southeastern sugar plantations and became yet another source of indebtedness for the Dominican government as Heureaux negotiated new loans with American sugar producers.\textsuperscript{87}

The rise of American influence over the economy and the sugar industry in particular brought demographic changes to the Dominican southeast as sugar producers brought in cheap labor from the British Caribbean and Haiti. The increase in the black Anglophone population stirred interest in the AME Church, and James Jr. received petitions from groups of migrants looking for religious guidance. By August of 1900, James Jr. took charge of two other Methodist societies organized in Monte Cristi in the extreme northwest of the country and San Pedro de Macorís in the southeast, the heart of the sugar industry.\textsuperscript{88} Both of these societies stemmed from prior African Methodist missionary efforts among small communities of British Caribbeans migrants in these towns.\textsuperscript{89}

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\textsuperscript{87} Moya Pons, \textit{Dominican Republic}, 276.
\textsuperscript{89} April Mayes documents that Charles H. Williams, a migrant from the British Caribbean, founded the AME Church in Miramar, San Pedro de Macoris in 1886. See April Mayes, \textit{The Mulatto Republic: Class, Race, and Dominican National Identity} (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014) 98. Articles in the Christian Recorder and the San Pedro de Macoris ayuntamiento records indicate that Williams was active between
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Although James Jr. took it upon himself to guide these groups in the AME discipline, he was already splitting time between the capital and Samaná—stations that were nearly two hundred miles apart, and he could not adequately serve four AME societies at once. Like other ministers working in foreign countries on behalf of home missionary boards, James Jr. requested help from his denomination’s missionary department. His first letters were bold in their requests for aid. On August 23, 1900, James Jr. explained to the PHFMS 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 were finding it especially hard to rent due to discrimination from Catholics. “This makes our own place of worship that much greater,” explained James Jr. He requested $600.00 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, he suggested that such men “be acquainted with the Spanish-language.” He was moreover, “opposed to [the] Church sending missionaries to any part of the work in [the republic] unless [the] missionary department can give

1889 and 1910. See Benjamin Tucker Tanner, “A Crisis – Our Foreign Missions,” Christian Recorder, December 5, 1889; Ayuntamiento de San Pedro de Macoris, Libro de Actas de Sesiones, Libro 10, May 20, 1910. In the 1880s, it seems that William’s and Astwood’s ministries were treated separately, and I have yet to find a connection. Williams also traveled to New York and presented on his mission there. See “News of the Week,” Christian Recorder, October 2, 1890. The connection with Monte Cristi in the 1890s is less certain. The AME Church through Rev. Dorce in Haiti kept tabs on British Caribbeans in Monte Cristi, among whom they expected to receive scholars for a school established in the Turks and Caicos Islands. See “Important Missionary Communication,” Christian Recorder, February 3, 1898.
support regularly for at least two years.” Based on James Jr.’s experience in the capital, a failed mission without support from the PHFMS would do more harm than good. Expecting a visit from Bishop Dr. Charles Spencer Smith, James Jr. ended his letter on a positive note; he was sure that the bishop would “make arrangements for the more successful prosecution of this work,” upon seeing it for himself. The multiple political, economic, and demographic changes that had taken place over 1899 and 1900 were taxing to say the least, but the establishment of four AME societies in less than two years was a promising advancement. As the Dominican Republic came under greater U.S. control, James Jr. hoped that AME leaders like Smith would see the potential of investing in Dominican missions.

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By December 1900, however, a bleak picture was beginning to form. Since his August letter, James Jr. had not heard back positively from the PHFMS, and the four AME congregations were still in need of assistance. He wrote urgently to Dr. Parks, “We need another man in this field. The work is too much.” James Jr. was unable to travel between the various AME stations, and the smaller societies were in danger of

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91 There 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 he thus 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 Jr. wrote. He suggested that the missionary to be appointed to Monte Cristi be a teacher who could support himself by charging tuition. James, J.P. “Santo Domingo City. August 23rd,” Christian Recorder, September 20, 1900.
dissolving. Moreover, it seemed Bishop Smith’s plans had changed. James JR. wrote, “Our bishop does not give us much encouragement concerning his coming.”92 Instead of visiting Santo Domingo, Smith planned to hold a joint session of the Haitian-Dominican conference in Port-au-Prince. This disappointing change of events meant that James Jr. would have to meet Smith in Haiti. James Jr. had hoped that the bishop would offer suggestions and financial aid to Santo Domingo. Yet, if the bishop did not personally witness the progress made in the country, there was little chance that he would take up the cause of Dominican missions.

On Sunday March 2493, the steamer carrying Bishop Smith dropped anchor at Port-au-Prince.93 This was the last leg of Smith’s month-long Caribbean tour, and his second trip to Haiti. This latest tour was much like his first in 1896, except this time Smith was a newly appointed bishop over the recently formed twelfth district, which included Canada and the West Indies.94 Moreover, during the first tour Smith had visited the Dominican Republic, which he considered “one of the three black Republics of the world.”95 Now four years later, the Dominican Republic was a growing

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94 During the AME General Conference of 1900, Smith was elected bishop and the West Indies and Canada were consolidated as one district.
95 Smith, C.S. “A Trip to the West Indies,” Christian Recorder, February 6, 1896. In Santo Domingo, Smith declared that the AME work in Santo Domingo city was abandoned. He also met president Ulises Heureux, who invited him to the presidential palace. See “A Trip to the West Indies,” Christian Recorder, March 12, 1896.
missionary field but it was not on Smith’s itinerary. Other places that did not have AME holdings, however, were on his schedule. Prior to arriving in Haiti, Smith had sailed to Barbados, St. Thomas, St. Croix, St. Kitts, Antigua, Guadalupe, Martinique, Demerara, Venezuela, and Curaçao.

The purpose of Smith’s travel was ambiguous. Ostensibly he was “only making a tour of inspection to see what…the AME Church has in [the West Indies].” His letters published in the Christian Recorder, however, were much like those he wrote in 1896; they described his impressions of the peoples and cultures he met, but did not contain detailed reports of the AME church’s work in the islands. It is therefore probable that Smith intended to use his observations during this trip to write a book entitled, “Glimpses of the West Indies,” which he had proposed in 1896 as a companion to his book “Glimpses of Africa.” His letters read as excerpts of a travelogue and served to inform the African-American public about race relations and the state of black populations outside of the United States. In his writings, Smith also sought to correct misconceptions and racist portrayals of black people living on the islands. For example, in Haiti he wrote against the “strained and far-fetched” depictions of the country in an

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97 During his trip, Smith wrote five letters that were printed in the Christian Recorder (the last letter was mislabeled as number 6). See “Here and There,” March 14, 1901; “Here and There,” April 4, 1901; “Here and There,” April 11, 1901; “Here and There,” April 25, 1901; and “Here and There. Bishop Smith’s West Indian Tour. Letter Number 6,” May 9, 1901.
1887 publication by James Anthony Frounde. “One thing certain,” Smith stated to his readers, “I discovered no trace of cannibalism.” Full of descriptions of the land and societies he encountered in the Caribbean, the book would demonstrate to the American public the falsehoods presented by other travelogue written by white travelers. With this purpose in mind, Smith’s reports lacked detailed accounts of the religious services and religious work completed by the pastors with whom he met.

In 1901, Smith held three Annual Conferences in Barbados, Demerara (British Guiana), and Haiti. AME ministers working in the Caribbean wrote and sent articles about the conference to the *Voice of Missions*, the church’s missionary monthly journal. One such report from the Demerara Conference (which was a joint conference that included the Windward Islands and British Guiana) sheds further light on the state of the home church’s attitude towards missions in the Caribbean. Speaking for the broader AME community in the U.S during the opening ceremony, Bishop Smith greeted the conference and stated that he was there to, “render all assistance possible to the Church and race,” although it was not yet clear, “what we shall be able to accomplish.” He then provided his perspective on AME missions in the Caribbean. He said:

“We are not here to squander our resources and energies in trying to supply the religious wants of those people whose religious wants are already supplied. We say to members of the various denominations, continue to worship at the alter around which

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your forefathers worshipped. We welcome those who come voluntarily into our community...with nearly ten millions of colored people in America among whom to operate, you see we cannot afford to waste time in fields where we are not wanted.\textsuperscript{100}

Proselytism, according to Smith was “a sinful waste of money and energy.” In his travels, he had come across many ministers of other denominations who were working in the islands, and it was not his intention to draw people away from these societies. This perspective was very different from the stance that Smith and other race leaders in the United States took towards missionary work in Africa. It was also a defensive move against white denominations in the British colonies who had labored for decades among slaves and their descendants, and who believed that the AME Church—with its black leadership and racial message—was a threat to their religious and racial hegemony.

Whether Smith’s perspective on proselytism pertained to the AME Church’s holdings in Catholic countries was less clear. Neither Smith’s comments about Haiti and the Dominican Republic nor his writings about other Catholic islands he visited shed much light on his ideas about Protestant evangelism in Catholic territories. For example, while spending time in Martinique and Guadeloupe prior to visiting Haiti, Smith remarked that Catholic “images and shrines are everywhere visible – tokens of the deep superstition which the people are steeped.”\textsuperscript{101} This observation, while prejudiced against

\textsuperscript{100} “The Windward Islands and British Guiana AME Church Conferences,” \textit{Voice of Missions} 9, no. 5 (May 1901): 4.

\textsuperscript{101} “Here and There,” \textit{Christian Recorder}, April 4, 1901.
Catholicism, nonetheless did not lead Smith to advocate for missionary action in Catholic territories. In Haiti, Smith wrote tritely that, “Roman Catholicism is the dominant religion of Hayti and San Domingo, and in those places, as everywhere else, it stoutly contests every attempt advance of Protestantism.” This was undoubtedly a topic that both Rev. Dorce (Haiti) and Rev. James Jr. had brought up during the conference’s business session—perhaps in response to Smith’s views on proselytism. Yet, the bishop did not describe ways to mitigate the challenges that Protestant missionaries faced. Considering his position on evangelism and the poverty of the AME Church in the United States, it is most likely that Smith urged James Jr. and the ministers of Haiti to not “disturb the civil or religious peace,” and to strive for self-help, “not in the way of wealth, but in that of self-denial and self-sacrifice.” Self-help, self-denial, and self-sacrifice, however, was all that James Jr. had ever known as an AME missionary in a Catholic country, where his small Protestant church had little hope of growth without proselytism financed from abroad.

103 “The Windward Islands and British Guiana AME Church Conferences,” Voice of Missions 9, no. 5 (May 1901): 4. Throughout 1901, the PHFMS begged the church to provide it with additional funds. Smith even wrote in a special appeal in support of the Easter Day collection. Yet, by September 1901 the PHFMS had to stop all charitable giving because an extraordinary donation to South Africa of $3,500 had depleted its funds. See “Auditing Committee’s Report,” Voice of Missions 9, no. 7 (July 1901): 2; “Bishop C.S. Smith’s Appeal,” Voice of Missions 9, no. 4 (April 1901): 16; “An Extraordinary Appeal,” Voice of Missions 9, no. 9 (September 1901): 2.
The 1901 Annual Conference was a disappointment to James Jr., who had hoped that Bishop Smith would directly intervene in Santo Domingo and promote the congregation’s interest to the U.S. church. Reappointed to the Santo Domingo and Samaná circuits, James Jr. wrote the “Fathers and Brethren of the home church,” with his own report of the Annual Conference. In the letter, he listed a number of issues that underscored his frustration with the home church. First, he had missed the monthly steamer from Santo Domingo to Port-au-Prince, and was thus forced to sail, “nearly right around the whole island of Santo Domingo and Hayti, a distance of nearly six hundred miles,” while transferring from one vessel to another. He then had to wait a month in Haiti before he could travel back. The time away from his congregations was an unnecessary inconvenience that could have been avoided if Smith had included Santo Domingo in his itinerary. Second, he explained to the home church that the distance between the Dominican Republic and Haiti made a joint session very expensive; the trip had cost James Jr. forty dollars in gold. Third, beyond the personal cost to James Jr., the financial burden of the trip prohibited other young men from traveling to the conference. As a result, “they must remain at home and be deprived of the help and blessings derived from such gatherings,” James Jr. wrote. The absence of those who were eligible to attend the conference was a further detriment to the progress of James

Jr.’s mission in Santo Domingo since only a bishop could ordain men and appoint them to preach. Fourth, James Jr.’s visit to Haiti had revealed to him the extent of the AME Church’s neglect of the Santo Domingo mission. He had seen that the Haitian mission had no more members than in Santo Domingo, but enjoyed the financial support that he had requested over the past year. “At Port-au-Prince we have a church building and parsonage,” he wrote. “In Santo Domingo we have no regular church buildings, but have property in church lots...we only ask you to help us to build [a church] in Santo Domingo and you will have nothing to regret in the outlay,” James Jr. concluded.

The circumstances of the Annual Conference revealed the home church’s attitude towards missions in the Dominican Republic. Although all members of the joint Haitian-Dominican conference were, “greatly delighted with [Smith’s] presence,” the conference made it plain to James Jr. that the Dominican Republic was not high on the list of priorities for the home church. James Jr. most likely explained to Smith the hardships that he faced, stressing the fact that he had repeatedly asked for another missionary to be sent to Santo Domingo. Smith, who was anxious to return to the United States cut his trip to Haiti short but, “promised to make an extensive visit to our work in Santo Domingo and Hayti next year, if God permits.” James Jr. hoped that Smith’s intentions

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105 At the Guiana Conference, one preacher, Rev. Franklin, was reprimanded for attempting to issue a local preacher’s license to a local member. See “The Windward Islands and British Guiana AME Church Conferences,” Voice of Missions 9, no. 5 (May 1901): 5.
107 Ibid.
were true. In his report to the home church published in the *Voice of Missions* he emphasized that the AME Church would not reach its potential in the Dominican Republic without greater assistance from the PHFMS, and stated that the smaller societies were in danger of dissolving. “If our connection had the men and means, a good work could be accomplished both at Monticristy and at Macoris,” he wrote, “but it is useless to think of retaining these two fields…unless proper help can be provided for them at once.” The urgency in his requests, however, fell on deaf ears. Smith never returned to the Dominican Republic, and over the next few years the Dominican Republic continued to be a low priority for the AME Church in the United States.

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The PHFMS’s neglect of the Dominican mission had dire consequences for the church on the island, and most pointedly for the congregations in Monte Cristi, San Pedro de Macorís, and the capital, which suffered additional setbacks after James Jr. decided to move his headquarters to Samaná sometime between late 1902 and 1903. By the end of 1902, the Monte Cristi mission no longer existed. The AME society in San

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108 Ibid.
109 James Jr. contemplated moving to Samaná as early as December 1900. See “A Letter from Rev. J.P. James, Santo Domingo City, Santo Domingo,” *Voice of Missions* 9, no. 1 (January 1901): 14. Then in July 1901, he proposed a plan to the PHFMS. “A young man could be sent,” he explained. “I could visit him every three months, and the two of us could keep the work at Macoris also by visiting alternately.” J.P. James, “Interesting Facts from New Mission at Samana, Santo Domingo,” *Voice of Missions* 9, no. 8 (August 1901): 13. It seems that he went through with this plan because by 1903, he was stationed in Samaná, and had left A.H. Rodgers in charge in Santo Domingo. J.P. James, “A Great Spiritual Feast at Samaná, Santo Domingo,” *Voice of Missions* 11, no. 2 (February 1903): 5.
Pedro de Macorís stayed active, but remained small with less than thirty members. Its survival most likely was due to the leadership of local preachers such as Charles H. Williams and Brother A.H. Rodgers. Rodgers led another small AME congregation at the Consuelo sugar plantation (about eighteen miles from San Pedro de Macorís) before moving to the capital where he took charge of the congregation in James Jr.’s absence.\textsuperscript{110}

The lack of AME leaders’ missionary interests in the Dominican Republic caused these poor results, and led Dr. Parks to question whether it was worth continuing AME missions in the country.

James Jr., however, was not discouraged. “We must not think of withdrawing,” he wrote urgently to Parks, emphasizing the growth of the congregations despite the lack of episcopal support.\textsuperscript{111} He responded to Parks’ by emphasizing statistics from the last three years.

“When I arrived at Santo Domingo City a little less than three years ago I found about half a dozen members in the AME Church. At present we have 43 members...We had no organization at Samana, but at present we have an organization of 70 members. At Macoris we have a small organization of 25 members. You can judge from this whether we have succeeded or not.”\textsuperscript{112}

\textsuperscript{110} James, “A Great Spiritual Feast at Samaná, Santo Domingo,” \textit{Voice of Missions} 11, no. 2 (February 1903): 5.

\textsuperscript{111} J.P. James, “Interesting Facts from New Mission at Samana, Santo Domingo,” \textit{Voice of Missions} 9, no. 8 (August 1901): 13.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.
To James Jr., the numbers were clear. The church had grown substantially in the areas where there were resources (albeit limited) to support it and despite the home church’s neglect. It had even grown so much in Samaná that Santo Domingo, with its forty-three members, was now a secondary priority to the northern port-town.\textsuperscript{113} The congregation in San Pedro de Macorís was third. These statistics, along with the fact that the people in Samaná had begun to construct a church building in the name of the AME Church demonstrated that there was still hope for AME missionary work in the Dominican Republic.

In many ways, however, James Jr.’s move to Samaná could be interpreted not as a positive response to the growth of the Samaná congregation, but as a reaction to the pressures he faced in the capital. The move was a withdrawal in its own right. Without financial aid from the home church, James Jr. and Sophia were barely able to afford living in the city. “Can you not help us a little just now? Otherwise, it will be impossible for me to remain in the city much longer,” he wrote in 1900.\textsuperscript{114} He then explained the situation. James Jr. raised only $1.50 per week from the church members, and the lowest rent he could find in the city was $20.00 per month. To supplement their income, James Jr. and Sophia founded a school, but only a-half dozen children could afford tuition. James Jr. informed the PHFMS that he did not raise, “more than half of my rent by

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.

school and church, saying nothing about our daily bread." The composition of the church’s membership complicated the situation. The forty-three members of the church were among the capital’s poorest residents and many of the members were also migrants who traveled for work. “There are almost constant removals,” James Jr. informed Parks. This meant that the membership continually fluctuated, and thus the congregation could not guarantee James Jr. a steady income. In contrast, the people in Samaná were “stationary...[and] settled in homes.” In Samaná, James JR. would have a lower cost of living and a congregation that promised to support him. The move to Samaná was thus a calculated step that enabled James Jr. to finance his missionary work in the country.

Financial distress was not the only pressure in the capital. The strong presence of the Catholic Church presented another challenge. Although the Catholic Church remained weak and subordinate to the Dominican State in the early twentieth century, it was still deeply tied to Dominican government and society. “Roman Catholic institutions are deeply rooted...[and] the power of the Romish clergy in this community

115 Ibid.
117 Ibid.
is great and vigilantly exercised,” wrote James Jr. in 1902. This context made the Dominican Republic “hard soil” for James Jr.’s Protestant work. “Our labors are confined to narrow limits,” because of the “superstition and prejudice [against Protestantism]. Consequently, our work is an uphill one,” wrote James Jr. as he urged the home church to “claim Santo Domingo for Christ.”

In order to grow the church in the capital, James Jr. believed that the AME church must attempt to convert the broader Dominican public, but this work could not be accomplished without a robust evangelical plan and financial support. As other missionaries of his time, James Jr. believed that social reform through education was one way to gain converts. “Protestant Church work in Catholic countries must be accomplished with schools,” he asserted to the home church. “We must show the people that we are interested not only in their religious welfare, but that we are interested in their social and intellectual welfare as well,” he explained. According to James Jr., schools were the primary reason why the Catholic Church—with its fifteen parishes in the capital—was so successful in the city of only 25,000 people. Funded by the government, the Catholics had a “firm grasp…upon the children and youth of this place,” and ran well-equipped schools in which they did “a good deal of charitable

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121 Ibid.
122 Ibid.
In contrast, James Jr. and Sophia’s Spanish and English day-school served only thirty-five children and received no government funding. He and Sophia also, “failed to receive any aid from the home Church, notwithstanding we made several applications.”

These facts made it clear to James Jr. that the AME Church could not compete with the Catholic Church in the capital unless the church in the U.S. put forth “more vigorous effort [and manifested more interest] than there has been during these few recent years.” He concluded that, “very little more [could] be accomplished in this city.”

It was apparent to James Jr. that the AME Church’s expansionary push abroad was executed without thought to the cultural and political context of the target countries. He thus urged the church to develop a missionary plan for Catholic territories. “What is true of Santo Domingo is true of other Catholic countries,” he wrote. “It would pay the Church to take these things into consideration and count the costs before undertaking new work in Catholic communities.” James Jr. most likely was thinking of the Cuban mission when he wrote these words. African-American leaders’ apparent enthusiasm for Cuban (and African) missions and the constant neglect of his work in the Dominican Republic was a puzzling irritation. Since 1898, the church has spent hundreds of dollars to establish African Methodism in Cuba, but by 1901 the work

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123 Ibid.
124 Ibid.
125 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
was still struggling to get on its feet. In almost as many years, James Jr. had established three separate AME societies, spreading the denomination both to the north and the south of the country. Yet, Cuba—along with Africa and Haiti—continued to capture AME church leaders’ attention more than Santo Domingo. Even Bishop Smith, who had heard of James Jr.’s trouble first-hand turned toward Cuba. Instead of returning to the Dominican Republic as promised in 1902, he traveled to Santiago, Cuba, where he assessed the church’s expansionary potential. Smith’s intensions towards Cuba stood in stark contrast to his remarks about proselytizing as stated at the 1901 Annual Conference in Demerara. In Cuba lived, “about a half a million blacks, pure blacks, on the Island, for whose moral and intellectual welfare nobody seems to care.”\textsuperscript{127} In Smith’s opinion, “this class would give our church and ministry a hearty welcome as soon as they were made to understand our mission.”\textsuperscript{128} Smith estimated that the active missionary in Cuba, Brother Steptoe, required at least $1500 to sustain the mission, which was purposed to serve the Spanish-speaking population. Connectional leaders in the AME church had never given Santo Domingo similar consideration.\textsuperscript{129}

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
By the time that Smith returned to the United States, James Jr.’s work in the capital was hindered for yet another reason: war. After Vásquez and Cáceres took the capital in 1899, their allies wanted Vásquez to run for president. Vásquez, however, believed he was too young to lead the nation and deferred to Juan Isidro Jimenes, a famous politician and caudillo who returned from exile after Heureaux’s death. With help from the young revolutionaries, Jimenes became president and Vásquez assumed the vice-presidency in November of 1899. Vásquez then returned to Santiago as the government’s delegate in the Cibao region. During his long absence from the capital, Heureaux’s supporters (the lilistas) attempted to regain political power by spreading rumors about Vásquez and turning the two leaders against one another. By 1902, the lilistas succeeded in convincing Jimenes that Vásquez would try to eliminate him in the next round of elections. Jimenes began to perceive Vásquez as a threat, and in turn Vásquez feared for his life. In a preemptive move, Vásquez called his supporters to rebel against Jimenes’ government on April 26, 1902. The rebel forces drove Jimenes into exile on May 2. On July 12, 1902.130 James Jr. described the effects of the recent war, which had suspended all public work and “made the times and living very hard.” He reported that, “Many of the followers of our society are unable to procure bread for their

130 Moya Pons, Dominican Republic, 280-283.
families.” The economic devastation thus considerably hindered the church’s progress.131

War continued to inhibit the mission churches in 1903.132 In March, hundreds of 

*lilistas*, who Vásquez had persecuted since he seized the presidency, escaped from their 
jail cells in the Ozama Fortress and revolted in the capital city, forcing Vásquez to resign 
on April 23, 1903.133 These events instigated another series of rebellion that once again 
negatively affected the AME congregations. This time, however, the fighting was much 
worse and did not only affect the capital but also the rural regions of the north. “The 
year 1903 will be remembered in the history of our work in this place as one of the most 
troubulous years,” James Jr. wrote.134 From his headquarters in Samaná, he described the 
“war, bloodshed, and strife” that the congregation had endured and that had prohibited 
them from holding religious services. He ended his letter abruptly, “compelled to 
conclude...[since] fighting has commenced in our midst.”135 Over the next year, the 
congregations in the Dominican Republic faced serious threats to the physical safety of 
its members as *horicistas, jimenistas,* and *lilistas* continued to vie for power.

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132 “We repeat the same old story, of scarcity of effective helpers, of trials, consisting of political 
disturbances, the poverty of our people, the fluctuating character of our work, and of systematic opposition 
to our missions,” wrote James Jr. in November of 1902. Again, in February 1903, he stated, “The unsettled 
condition of this republic keeps the most of our followers in absolute poverty. See “A Word from Santo 
Domingo,” *Voice of Missions* 10, no. 11 (November 1902): 11; “A Great Spiritual Feast at Samana, Santo 
Domingo,” *Voice of Missions* 11, no. 2 (February 1903): 5.
133 Moya Pons, *Dominican Republic*, 285.
135 Ibid.
The consecutive civil wars left the Dominican poor class destitute. Members of the AME congregations suffered hunger as crops were burned and famine struck the nation. Donations to the church also decreased and James Jr. became even more demanding in his writings to the PHFMS. “The financial weakness of these Missions have been reported to the home Church over and over,” he accused, “and yet...the home Church has never seen fit to appropriate one dollar to it for building and repairing purposes since we have been in this field.” In four years since his arrival, this statement was the boldest condemnation James Jr. had ever made against the AME Church in the United States. It was enough to garner him some, albeit limited, attention from AME leaders in the U.S.

6.4 Conclusion

In May 1904, James Jr. attended the twenty-second session of the General Conference of the AME Church in Chicago, Illinois, where he presented a report of the last four years of his work and petitioned the AME church body on behalf of the Samaná congregation. Since 1901, the congregation had incurred debt on the materials they obtained for the construction of the church building. They had worked faithfully over the past three years to reduce their debt, and had even reduced the balance from $700 to $475 during the wars of 1903. Church members offered free labor in order to avoid

136 Ibid.
137 “A Great Spiritual Feast at Samana, Santo Domingo,” Voice of Missions 11, no. 2 (February 1903): 5.
further debt. It was a labor of love by people whom, “under trying circumstances, [were] daily doing all they can to help themselves.”\textsuperscript{138} By 1904, the Samaná church building was not finished, but the construction was advanced enough so that the people could hold services in it. James Jr. petitioned the church in the United States for $1200. This sum would complete the building in Samaná and enable the congregation in Santo Domingo to make repairs on the church in the capital. Although James Jr. probably expected little, Dr. Parks helped James Jr. to obtain $300 from the Church Extension Department. James Jr. reported that this sum “lightened somewhat our burden of debt and greatly delighted and encouraged the hearts of our people.”\textsuperscript{139}

But Parks was less delighted. Reflecting upon the expenditures of the PHFMS during the General Conference, he published an article that detailed the financial trouble of the department. “Ever since the General Conference, there has been a constant drain upon the treasure of the Missionary Department,” he wrote in the \textit{Voice of Missions}. The PHFMS had financed the travels of the various missionary delegates to the conference, including James Jr.\textsuperscript{140} It had spent $300 on the Santo Domingo mission and $175 to open a new mission in Kingston, Jamaica. There was also additional pressure upon the department to provide for a new mission at Georgetown, British Guiana. Parks also

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\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{139} J.P. James, “African Methodism in the Dominican Republic,” \textit{Voice of Missions} 12, no. 9 (September 1904): 15.
\textsuperscript{140} “The Increasing Demands for Funds,” \textit{Voice of Missions} 12, no. 9 (September 1904): 5.
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hoped to send $100 to a minister who requested for aid in Africa. Besides these expenses, within the last year the AME church’s missionary efforts had expanded to Mexico, and the department had promised to send “a new pulpit, a small organ, six or ten dozen chairs and Sunday school charts” to Rev. Lucas Ponce in Santiago, Cuba.\(^{141}\)

The financial troubles facing the department were seemingly insurmountable as Parks once again made an appeal to the larger church body to send money to the department.

These two distinct responses indicate the tensions that characterized the relationship between missionaries and the Missionary Board. They also underscore the fact that even though James Jr. maintained the connection to the AME Church throughout his life, the issues that he and AME leaders in the U.S. concerned themselves with were in fact distinct. The PHFMS’s neglect of Dominican missions stemmed from its financial inability to fund missionary work—even for its top priority areas like Africa and Cuba. For James Jr. and other African Methodists in the Dominican Republic, this neglect compounded with the multiple challenges they faced on Dominican soil. In the following years, James Jr. would continue to experience the difficulties that characterized his first four years of ministry in the Dominican Republic, and in time he would change his missionary strategy from evangelizing to both Dominicans and African-American descendants in Santo Domingo to focusing solely on black

Anglophone communities in Samaná and elsewhere. His story reveals that the Afro-diasporic connections in the AME Church were wrought with inequalities that stunted the church’s growth in the Dominican Republic and further marginalized black Protestantism within Dominican society.
Epilogue

“The Dominican Republic is not a black republic,” declared Wesleyan missionary Emerson Mears on March 30, 1905 in a letter to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society of London. Mears, a white Briton who had lived in the Dominican Republic for over a decade, was concerned that the large population of Anglophone Afro-Caribbeans who made up his congregation in Puerto Plata stifled the development of Dominican Protestantism. He recommended that the Wesleyan Methodist church either cease its operation in the Dominican Republic or create a European or high-class Dominican Protestant pastorate. “The natives universally are used to, and expect a white ministry,” he warned, “ignore this and the result is termination and spiritual decadence.”

Mears’s perspective differed strikingly from the opinion of AME Church leaders. “San Domingo is also a black man’s Republic, which with Hayti and Liberia constitute the black republics of the world,” wrote Charles Spencer Smith of the AME Church in 1896 in a letter published almost a decade before Mears’s correspondence. Smith, who was ordained an AME bishop in 1900, maintained the AME vision of uniting the black race through foreign missions until his death in 1923. The Dominican Republic would

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1 Emerson Mears, “Wesleyan Methodist Missions in the Dominican Republic—West Indies,” March 30, 1905, Methodist Missionary Society Archives (London), West Indies Correspondence: H-2707, Box no. 205/733, 1890/1904-05, microfiche 2062, General Commission on Archives and History, United Methodist Church. In the report the term black is underlined as above.
2 Emerson Mears, “Wesleyan Methodist Missions in the Dominican Republic.”
3 Dr. C.S. Smith, “A Trip to the West Indies,” Christian Recorder, March 12, 1896.
remain a “black republic” in the eyes of many African Americans throughout the first decades of the twentieth century.\(^4\)

The contrast between Mears’s and Smith’s racialized understanding of the Dominican Republic underscore the fundamental role that race played in Protestant missions in the country. African American Protestants imagined the country in the same context as Haiti and Liberia, and thus established black-led missions on the island. White ministers, however, declared just the opposite; the Dominican Republic was not a black republic, but a country in need of white, Spanish-speaking Protestant missionaries. From their perspective, only white, Spanish-speaking missionaries would be able to decouple the strong tie between nationalism and Catholicism. Ignoring the history of black Protestantism in the capital, white British and American missionaries discouraged black-led, bilingual missionary work and discursively linked the country to Latin America instead of the black circum-Caribbean. Their perceptions perpetuated the idea that the Dominican Republic was a *Latin* country after all.

\(^4\) A 1917 letter from A.H. Butler of the American-Liberian Trading Co. provides an example. In the letter, Butler requests that the U.S. Military government of Santo Domingo appoint him as Consul of Santo Domingo in Liberia. He refers to the Dominican Republic as a Negro country. Abraham Henry Butler to the President of the Republic of Santo Domingo, October 22, 1917, Archivo General de la Nación (Santo Domingo), *Colección Gobierno Militar*, Box 61, no. 12.
**Negro Migrants vs. Spanish Dominicans: A Wesleyan Missionary’s Viewpoint**

Emerson Mears had lived in the Dominican Republic for over a decade, when he wrote candidly to his superiors about the state of Wesleyan missions in the Dominican Republic. From his perspective, the current missionary methods did not make any sense. The Wesleyan mission had operated in Puerto Plata since the early 1830s, but the character of the mission had changed over the years. Mears informed the London society that at first the mission served black American emigrants, but by 1905 the congregation was mostly, “English colonials of the poorer working classes.” He accused these British Caribbean migrants of being “non-progressive and spiritually decadent.” Mears believed that they could “exert little or no influence upon the nation at large.” In his opinion, the Wesleyan mission was missing an opportunity to minister to Spanish speaking Dominicans, who Mears believed would be receptive to the Protestant church despite the prevalence of Catholicism.

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5 Mears 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. See Edward Albert Odell, *It Came to Pass* (New York: Board of National Missions, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1952), 147.

6 The words “spiritual decadent” are racialized portrayals of West Indian religiosity and may refer to African religious traditions. For further description of stereotypes of West Indians see Teresita Martínez-Vergne, *Nation and Citizen in the Dominican Republic, 1880-1916* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005) 87.


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Mears complained that the Wesleyan Church’s current organization of Caribbean missions did not make sense. Since 1885, Haiti and the Dominican Republic made up the Wesleyan Church’s Western Conference, which was headquartered in Jamaica. Since the highest-ranking church officers were stationed miles away on an English-speaking island, they were often unaware of the missionary concerns in Hispaniola. Consequently, no work had been done to recognize the lingual and cultural differences between western and eastern Hispaniola. The Dominican Republic made up part of a joint synod with Haiti, a French-speaking country. Most of the British missionaries stationed in the Dominican Republic spoke English or French—not Spanish. Moreover, the Haitian missions held priority over the stations in Dominican territory, and the superintendent of the district always lived in Port-au-Prince, isolated from missions on the eastern side of the island in Puerto Plata, Samaná and Santo Domingo. Perhaps these conditions would have made sense when the island was under Haitian control in 1822-1844, or when the Wesleyan missionaries were just beginning their work in eastern Hispaniola and were content to serve only English-speaking immigrants from the United States. Yet, in the first decade of the twentieth century, such circumstances produced an unusual situation: “Our present position is this,” wrote Mears 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.”⁸ In short, Wesleyan missionaries in the Dominican Republic did not serve the “natives,” as they did in Jamaica and Haiti. For Mears, this fact contradicted the idea of evangelistic Protestant missions.

According to Mears, a true missionary church would target a broader base of the Dominican population. From his experiences in Puerto Plata, Mears perceived the Dominican population of consisting of three primary classes. First, he identified the “English speaking negroes” from surrounding islands. The second class 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, and nominally free thinking or anti-clerical.” In his opinion, 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,” the Wesleyans concerned themselves with the first class, transient Anglophone blacks. “Our work is now almost exclusively composed of class one; for class two we do not cater, & class three continues untouched almost,” Mears

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⁸ Emerson Mears to Milton Brown, March 16, 1907, Methodist Missionary Society Archives (London), West Indies Correspondence: H-2707, Box no. 733, 1906-07, microfiche 2064, General Commission on Archives and History, United Methodist Church.
explained. The obvious next step was to change the missionary focus and target the Spanish-speaking Dominican population.⁹

In order to reach this dominant echelon of Dominican society, Mears believed that the Wesleyans would have to do more than merely provide Spanish religious services. In his opinion, changes in missionary methods required special consideration of race. Reflecting the views and values of elite Dominicans, Mears perceived a racial divide between the black Anglophone migrants and Spanish-speaking Dominicans. He explained that, “Dominican public opinion is only tolerant of class one (‘English speaking negroes’) and is opposed to any augmentation of it.”¹⁰ Mears also stated that, “the Dominicans to an extent resent the presence of the English blacks.”¹¹ Due to this sentiment, Mears claimed that it was improper to continue to group Dominicans and British Caribbeans together. “Mixed services are of little practical use in this country,” he wrote. 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. Thus, Mears asked the Missionary Board to train for Englishmen and “high class” (ie. white) natives in order to cater to the public’s supposed desire for white, Spanish-speaking clergy.¹²

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⁹ Emerson Mears to Milton Brown, March 16, 1907.
¹⁰ Emerson Mears to Milton Brown, March 16, 1907.
¹¹ Emerson Mears, “Wesleyan Methodist Missions in the Dominican Republic—West Indies.”
¹² Ibid.
Although Mears ultimately hoped that his words would convince the committee to invest in Dominican missionary work, he presented one caveat. If the 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 had equipped its missionaries with, “men, money, & method.” He explained this proposition:

“If we are not prepared to go forward, to change our more 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.”

In Mears’ 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. “Thus we shall cease to be an impediment in the way of the evangelization of this country,” Mears concluded, “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.” His proposal was clear: the Dominican Republic—a Spanish country—could become the Wesleyan Church’s missionary cause in Latin America.

13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
“Mixed” Congregations: Black Missionaries in the Capital

Miles away from Puerto Plata, bilingual congregations led by black ministers continued their work amid the impoverished classes of Dominicans and black Anglophone migrants in Santo Domingo. These “mixed” congregations, albeit poorly funded, existed as counter models to Mears’ perspectives. In 1907, Rev. Charles E. Goodin, now affiliated with the Wesleyan church, wrote that, “Services are generally carried out in English and Spanish. Many natives are interested and we have two helpers among them.”16 Rev. Jacob P. James Jr. of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church also reported native interest and the potential of growing the church in the initial years after his arrival in January of 1899. These two ministers were not alone in their efforts.17 The fact that a few black-led, bilingual congregations existed and united black migrants with Spanish-speaking Dominicans contradicted the notion that white, Spanish-speaking ministers were the only acceptable form of leadership and that mixed congregations could not work in the Dominican Republic. These mixed congregations were spaces in which a different Protestant missionary future for the Dominican Republic seemed possible.

16 Goodin to Mears, March 12, 1907, Methodist Missionary Society Archives (London), West Indies Correspondence: H-2707, Box no. 733, 1906-07, microfiche 2064, General Commission on Archives and History, United Methodist Church.
17 In San Pedro de Macorís, Rev. Benjamin Wilson, an Episcopal priest associated with James T. Holly’s church in Haiti, offered bilingual services and ran a bilingual school for migrant and Dominican children. Philip E. Wheaton and William L. Wipfle, Triunfando sobre las tragedias: Historia centenaria de la iglesia episcopal Dominicana, 1897-1997 (Santo Domingo: Editora Educativa Dominicana, 1997), 27-33.
In the early 1900s, black-led congregations showed promise in the capital and elsewhere. Aware of Goodin’s work in 1907, Mears reported that Goodin, “does good Spanish work... [he] teaches and preaches regularly in the language.” Goodin himself reported in 1905 that native Dominicans attended his sermon, “The Divine Revelation Made to Man.” Many Dominicans later bought a printed copy of the sermon, which was published in a local newspaper. Goodin also reported that he was well received in Azua, Pueblo Viejo and Ansonia, where he evangelized to hundreds of people in 1910. “They wanted me to stay among them at once,” he wrote, “Messages have reached me from them stating that I am expected soon for many who were not present are desirous to see and hear us.” James Jr. likewise reported great interest in the capital, where he and Sophia taught school in Spanish and English. Goodin and James Jr.’s experiences suggest that Mears’s observations about the racial divisions in Dominican society were perhaps not as entrenched as they seemed to the British minister. As late as 1910, James Jr. was still optimistic. “There is a future for the AME Church in this republic,” he wrote, “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.” If black ministers like James Jr. had received adequate funding and support, perhaps their bilingual work

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18 Emerson Mears to Milton Brown, March 16, 1907. 
would have grown among the Spanish-speaking Dominican population. To carry on with bilingual missionary work, black ministers had to first believe in this possibility.

Nevertheless, black-led congregations did not fare well in the first decades of the twentieth century. Although James Jr., Goodin, and others continued in their bilingual work, their marginalized status within Dominican society and the lack of financial support for their work resulted in their demise. Goodin received no financial assistance from the British Wesleyan Church. Instead, his limited funding came from the Christian Missionary Alliance of New York, which began supporting Goodin in 1894. Thus, although Goodin considered himself part of the Wesleyan mission, the Wesleyan Church fell short of funding him. In 1907, Goodin explained that he could not afford life in the capital. “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),” he wrote, “I have therefore and do a great deal of teaching in the city to make existence possible.”23 James Jr. was in a similar situation. On October 26, 1905, James Jr. wrote to the AME PHFMS in New York. “The work of the missions have steadily and quietly gone on,” he explained, “but the results are not all that we expected.”24 The congregation faced two principle difficulties: “the continual removals of our people…to other places, and the almost impoverished condition of our people.”25 Working within the poorest

23 Goodin to Mears, March 12, 1907, Methodist Missionary Society Archives (London).
25 Ibid.
sector of Dominican society and underpaid by their missionary distinct bodies, Goodin and James Jr. could not provide for their parishioners’ temporal needs. Their evangelistic work suffered as a result. While Mears most likely saw their failure to grow rapidly among Dominicans as evidence of the racial divide between Anglophone Afro-Caribbeans and Dominicans, Goodin and James Jr. discussed the difficulties they face in terms of economics and not race.

Nevertheless, for white missionaries like Mears to see black missionaries as equal and to suggest a missionary model in which black ministers led congregations funded by wealthy white denominations such as the Wesleyans was inconceivable. In the early twentieth century belief in white supremacy led white clergy to generally ignore the potential 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 Wesleyan Church’s financial problems, while James Jr. 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 filed, ready to take the advantage of the opportunities offered,” James Jr. warned in a letter to the PHFMS in 1911.26 He cautioned that without help from abroad his

26 J.P. James, “AME Church Work at Samana, Santo Domingo.” The Moravians arrived in 1907 and built an iron church in San Pedro de Macoris.
impoverished congregation would lose its members and the small progress the church had made in the capital would be overturned.

**American Assessments: Plans for Occupancy via Puerto Rico**

In early September 1911, Philo W. Drury and Nathan H. Huffman, white American missionaries in Puerto Rico, surveyed the Dominican Republic on behalf of the ecumenical Evangelical Union of Puerto Rico (EUPR). In their report entitled, “Occupancy of Santo Domingo by Evangelical Missions,” Drury and Huffman proposed that American churches establish Dominican missions. “It is in harmony with the facts to state that Protestant Christianity is not being fairly represented before the Dominican people,” they wrote. The two American missionaries had come across James Jr.’s and Goodin’s Protestant congregations in the capital. Noting that missionary stations were “small” and had “colored pastors,” they, like Mears, reported that the contact that current black Protestant missionaries had with black Anglophone migrants was 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

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28 Drury and Huffman noted that, “There is work of a similar character in three or four other points of the republic.” They were most likely referring to Wilson’s black congregation in San Pedro and the Wesleyan church’s work in the north since black Anglophone migrants made up the majority of these congregations. The only other denomination that they mentioned was the Moravian Church, which had organized in San Pedro de Macoris. They believed that, “this Church will limit its activities to the English-speaking negro population.”
the agencies now at work,” they wrote. From their viewpoint, efforts to evangelize Dominicans had been “of an independent character, and in the main unsuccessful” because of the race and the ethnicity of the preachers and parishioners. They suggested that American missions enter the Dominican Republic via missionary work they were already completing in Puerto Rico, an island whose population shared the same language and perceived Latin race as the majority of Dominicans.29

By the time Drury and Huffman arrived in the Dominican Republic, the United States had already made its mark on the island. After Heureaux’s assassination in 1899, Dominican politicians came to terms with the national debt that had accumulated under his regime. In 1900, the nation’s debt totaled over thirty-four million dollars, with creditors in France, Belgium, Germany, Italy and Britain. The U.S. government negotiated various deals with the Dominican government in an attempt to settle the European debt and thus keep European forces out of the Dominican Republic and the Caribbean. Under the Ramon Cáceres administration in 1905, a new agreement between the United States and the Dominican Republic enabled the United States to take over the customs houses and distribute payments to the country’s European creditors. Then, in

1907, Dominican-American Convention extended this agreement when an American bank consolidated the Dominican Republic’s debt and paid off its European creditors. Under this treaty, the United States 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.”

While Drury and Huffman perceived American intervention in Dominican affairs as a stabilizing force that would usher in Protestant missions, they were also aware that it increased anti-American sentiment. According to Drury and Huffman, the changes already taking place on the island would advance Dominican liberalism and Protestantism. They noted that, “there is complete religious freedom in the Republic,” and “a breaking away from the domination of the Catholic Church.” These factors indicated to Drury and Huffman that, “the people of Santo Domingo have entered with determination on the struggle upward.” In their opinion, this progress made the Dominican people “deserving of the best help, such as will come from the introduction of evangelical Christianity.” In “introducing the Gospel at this time,” they wrote, American Protestants would be “getting into the current of improvements and progress, and thus grow up with the country.”

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31 For proof of this rupture, Drury and Huffman cited Dominican law, which prohibited clergy from protesting the liberty of worship. They also referenced the “modernization of the school system.”
32 Philo W. Drury and N.H. Huffman, “Occupancy of Santo Domingo by Evangelical Missions.”
country, Drury and Huffman also noted that Protestant missions would not be an easy pursuit. American encroachment on Dominican sovereignty had “awaken antipathy in the minds of the Dominicans against the Americans.” Many Dominicans feared that the United States “may have designs against the political independence of the Republic,” as the United States had in Puerto Rico. Although the U.S. Minister to Santo Domingo, Mr. W.W. Russell, reassured the Drury and Huffman that anti-American sentiment was not universal, they were not convinced; the United States’ constant intervention in Dominican politics and finances were highly criticized.33

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 relationships throughout the nineteenth century, when political refugees from either island fled to the other. More recently, the sugar industry had led to a mass migration of Puerto Ricans in the Dominican southeast.34 The missionaries reported that “at least 15,000 Puerto Ricans [are] in Santo Domingo,” employed on sugar plantations. Drury and Huffman had met a number of people who they had known in Puerto Rico while in the Dominican southeast. The Puerto Ricans, “invariably greeted us with great cordiality, and many expressed their desire to see evangelical missions opened in Santo

33 Ibid.
34 Hoetink, The Dominican People, 1850-1900: Notes for a Historical Sociology (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 29-32.
Domingo,” they reported. 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 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 Dominicans “would help to overcome prejudice, and would induce the Dominicans to attend the services.” By demonstrating to the Dominican people that Protestant evangelical Christianity was as much for their “race” as it was for the white American and black Anglophone migrant in their midst, the Puerto Rican connection would demonstrate that American missions were not part of U.S. imperialistic endeavors.  

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 wars that ensued led American churches 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 American missionaries in Puerto Rico renewed their interest in the Dominican Republic. That year, the board of the EUPR voted to raise the question of Dominican missions to

35 Running Dominican missionary work via Puerto Rico also addressed Drury and Huffman’s concerns about financing missionary work in the Dominican Republic. Philo W. Drury and N.H. Huffman, “Occupancy of Santo Domingo by Evangelical Missions.”
various church boards in the United States. At the same time, the Foreign Missionary Conference of North America organized an ecumenical conference in Panama in order to prepare for large-scale missionary work in Latin America. A year later, the American ecumenical organization, the Committee on Cooperation in Latin America (CCLA) was formed. The cooperation between the CCLA and the EUPR led to the founding of the Board for Christian Work in Santo Domingo four years later during the U.S. Occupation (1916-1924). In 1922, the Board for Christian Work established the Iglesia Evangélica Dominicana (IED), the first ecumenical Protestant church on the island commissioned to target the Dominican people. In the lead up to the IED’s founding, Drury and Huffman’s 1911 report was reread and cited in additional surveys of the island. The evangelical plan that they had developed had finally come to fruition. Indeed, 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 a parallel to U.S. government action in the region.  

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37 All 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 Porto 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 CCLA was then established in 1917. See Samuel Guy Inman, *Christian Cooperation in Latin America* (Madison Avenue: Committee on Cooperation in Latin America, 1917), 32.
Conclusion

The first two decades of Dominican Protestant history in the twentieth century were marked by British and American speculations over what could be done considering the “peculiar conditions that prevailed” in the Dominican Republic. It was a period when white North Atlantic ministers called for missionary work in the Spanish-speaking eastern side of Hispaniola by emphasizing the racial division between Dominicans and black migrants. It was also a period in which black ministers’ bilingual congregations suffered for the lack of financial support and consequently became increasingly homogenized and marginalized. Cut off from the ecumenical organization of white denominations in the 1910s, these bilingual congregations were later forgotten. “The Wesleyans...were respected and loved for their exemplary lives and their devoted service among the people on the north shore,” wrote one church historian in 1952, “but no [Protestant] work had been done along the southern shore, in the capital, or in the west.”

This dissertation reveals the inaccuracy of this 1952 statement. The idea that the Dominican Republic was a blank slate for missionary work was based on white missionaries’ racist perception that black ministers were incompetent and that the supposed racial distinction between Dominicans and black Anglophone people

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40 Odell, It Came to Pass, 152.
necessitated segregated missions. However, Afro-Caribbean preachers of the 1880s, 1890s, and early 1900s did not have the same outlook. As they theorized and argued over missions, other concerns were raised. Should they pursue foreign missions (or AME affiliation, in the case of the Dominican Protestants) in order to unify the race? Or, should they strive for equality as black Protestants within their respective nations? What was their responsibility towards their countries, towards each other, and towards God?

In pursuing answers to these questions, AME leaders and other black Protestants formulated myriad responses. In Santo Domingo, some leaders claimed Dominican citizenship and imagined themselves as part of the “geographical and political constituency” of the Republic. They founded bilingual, multicultural Protestant congregations and schools in the Dominican capital, Santo Domingo, and in Barahona and San Pedro de Macoris. Other leaders and church members found solace in their connection to the AME Church and its message of racial uplift and racial unification. They built a network of Caribbean AME congregations, maintaining ties to Haiti, the British and Dutch Caribbean, and the United States. These responses were neither absolute nor mutually exclusive. As Astwood, Goodin, James Jr., and others’ stories indicate, people had multiple strategies. And they changed their stories and allegiances in order to negotiate the hegemonic racist structures of the period and to fit their individual needs and priorities. Despite the ambiguity and incongruences, however, one
thing is certain. Black Protestantism in Santo Domingo was not as foreign or other as it is popularly remembered. Nor was it ever totally erased from historical memory.
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Biography


During her time at Duke University, Davidson has received numerous fellowships and awards in recognition and support of her academic research. These include the New York Public Library Short-Term Research Grant, a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad grant, a travel fellowship through the Global Foundation for Democracy and Development, a Harvey Fellowship through the Mustard Seed Foundation, grants from the General Commission of Archive and History of the United Methodist Church, an SSRC-MMUF Pre-Doctoral Research Development Grant, and two FLAS grants for the study of Portuguese. During her tenure at Duke, Davidson was part of the University Scholars Program and the society of Duke Fellows.