

LATIN AMERICAN SOCIO-RELIGIOUS STUDIES PROGRAM -  
PROGRAMA LATINOAMERICANO DE ESTUDIOS SOCIORRELIGIOSOS  
(PROLADES)

**ENCYCLOPEDIA OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN  
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN:  
RELIGION IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

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Last revised on 21 October 2010

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# Religion in the Dominican Republic

## Country Summary

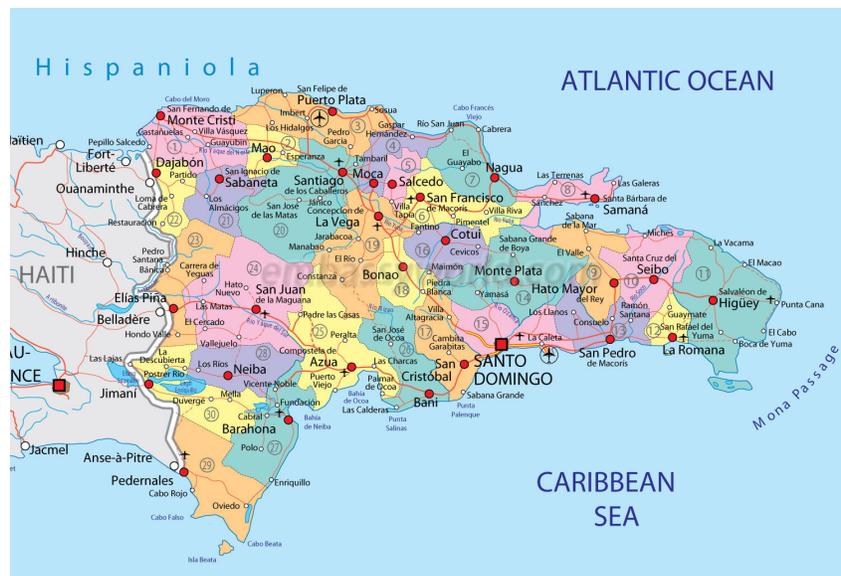
The Dominican Republic is a Caribbean nation that occupies the eastern two-thirds of the island of Hispaniola, so named by the early Spanish explorers. Its coastline borders the Caribbean Sea, while its western border is shared with Haiti. Both by area and population, the Dominican Republic is the second largest Caribbean nation after Cuba, with 48,442 sq km (18,704 sq mi) and an estimated 10 million people in 2009 (U.N. report). The nation is divided into 31 provinces.

Hispaniola is located between the islands of Cuba to the west and Puerto Rico to the east, within the **Atlantic Ocean's hurricane belt**. This mountainous land has the highest mountain, Pico Duarte (3,098 meters = 10,164 feet), in all the Caribbean islands, and Lago Enriquillo is the Caribbean's largest lake and its lowest elevation: approximately 44 meters below sea level. Today, the nation has an average temperature of 26°C (78.8° F) and great biological diversity.

Hurricane “David” devastated the nation in 1979. One-thousand people died and an estimated 200,000 people lost their homes. Other hurricanes that have caused considerable damage in the Dominican Republic since 1965 were: Inez (1966), Beulah (1967), David (1979), Hortense (1996), Georges (1998), Jeanne (2004) and Hanna (2008). One of the deadliest hurricanes to hit the DR occurred on 3 September 1930; **Hurricane San Zenon** made landfall near Santo

Domingo, with peak winds of 150 mph (240 km/h) and atmospheric pressure of 933 mbar. The worst of the hurricane occurred in a 20-mile (32 km) diameter of its landfall location. Wind gusts in the city were estimated from 150 miles per hour (240 km/h) to 200 miles per hour (320 km/h). The passage of the hurricane caused severe damage, estimated at \$50 million (1930 USD); the Red Cross estimated that 2,000 people perished in the city, with an additional 8,000 injured.

**The mountains and valleys** of the Dominican Republic divide the country into the northern, the central, and the southwestern regions. The **northern region**, bordering the Atlantic Ocean, consists of the Atlantic coastal plain, the Cordillera Septentrional (Northern Mountain Range), the Valle del Cibao, and the Samaná Peninsula. The **central region** is dominated by the



Cordillera Central (Central Mountain Range), which runs eastward from the Haitian border and turns southward at the Valle de Constanza and flows into the Caribbean Sea. This southward branch is known as the Sierra de Ocoa. The Cordillera Central is 2,000 meters high near the Haitian border and reaches a height of over 3,000 meters at Pico Duarte. This mountain range contains the four highest peaks in the entire Caribbean: Pico Duarte (3,098 meters = 10,164 feet above sea level), La Pelona (3,094 meters = 10,151 feet), La Rucilla (3,049 meter = 10,003 feet) and Pico Yaque (2,760 meter = 9,055 feet). An eastern branch of the Cordillera Central extends through the Sierra de Yamasá to the Cordillera Oriental (Eastern Range). **The southwestern region** lies south of the Valle de San Juan. It encompasses the Sierra de Neiba, which extends 100 km from the Haitian border to the Yaque del Sur River. On the eastern side of the Yaque del Sur lies the Sierra de Martín García, which extends twenty-five km from the river to the Llanura de Azua (Plain of Azua).

The Caribbean Coastal Plain (*Llano Costero del Caribe*) is the largest of the plains in the Dominican Republic. Stretching north and east of Santo Domingo, it contains many sugar plantations in the grass lands (*savannas*) that are common there. West of **Santo Domingo de Guzmán** its width is reduced to 10 km (6.2 mi) as it hugs the coast; it ends at the mouth of the Ocoa River. Another large plain is the *Llanura de Azua*, a very dry region in Azua Province. The southern coastal plains and the Cibao Valley are the most densely populated areas of the country.

Between the Central and Northern mountain ranges is the rich and fertile Cibao Valley, which contains the city of **Santiago de los Caballeros** and most of the most productive farming areas in the nation. Rather less productive is the semi-arid San Juan Valley, located south of the Central Cordillera. Still more arid is the Neiba Valley, located between the Sierra de Neiba and the Sierra de Bahoruco. Much of the land in the Enriquillo Basin is below sea level, with a hot, arid, desert-like environment. There are other smaller valleys in the mountain regions, such as the Constanza, Jarabacoa, Villa Altigracia, and Bonao valleys.

**Four major rivers** drain the numerous mountains of the Dominican Republic. The Yaque del Norte is the longest and most important river in the nation. It carries excess water down from the Cibao Valley and empties into Monte Cristi Bay, in the northwest. Likewise, the Yuna River serves the Vega Real and empties into Samaná Bay, in the northeast. The San Juan Valley is drained by the San Juan River, a tributary of the Yaque del Sur, which empties into the Caribbean on the south coast. The Artibonito River is the longest in Hispaniola and flows westward from the DR into Haiti.

The Dominicans often refer to their country as **Quisqueya**, which allegedly was a name used by the native Amerindians when the first Spaniards arrived. Hispaniola is perhaps most famous as the site of the first European colonies in the New World, founded by Christopher Columbus on his voyages in 1492 and 1493. The colony was the springboard for the further Spanish conquest of the Americas and for decades the headquarters of Spanish power in the hemisphere.

**Christopher Columbus** died at age 55 in Spain in 1506. His remains were first interred at Valladolid and then at the monastery of La Cartuja in Seville (southern Spain) at the request of his son Diego, who had been governor of Hispaniola. In 1542, the remains were transferred to Colonial Santo Domingo, in the present-day Dominican Republic. In 1795, when France took over the entire island of Hispaniola, Columbus' remains were moved to Havana, Cuba. After

Cuba became independent following the Spanish-American War in 1898, the remains were moved back to Spain, to the Cathedral of Seville, where they were placed on an elaborate catafalque.

**The Columbus Lighthouse** (*Faro a Colón* in Spanish) is a monument located in Santo Domingo Este, Dominican Republic, in tribute to Christopher Columbus. Construction began in 1948 using plans drawn by J. L. Gloeave. The monument was inaugurated in 1992 in time for the 500th anniversary of the Discovery of America. It was funded by the Latin American states and the total cost of construction was approximately \$70 million. The monument's lighthouse-style projects beams of light, forming a cross shape, which are so powerful they can be seen from Puerto Rico.

**Santo Domingo de Guzmán** is the capital of the Republic and its largest city, located on the southern coast. The city, as well as the nation, was named after **Saint Dominic**, also known as **Dominic of Osma**, **Dominic de Guzmán** and **Domingo Félix de Guzmán** (b.1170-d.1221), who was the founder of the Friars Preachers, popularly called the Dominicans or Order of Preachers (OP), a Roman Catholic religious order, founded in 1216 in France.

The **Greater Santo Domingo** population was reported as 3,813,214 in 2002 (census). The city lies within the boundaries of the Distrito Nacional (pop. 2,987,013 in 2002), which is bordered on three sides by the Province of Santo Domingo. This important city, at the mouth of the Ozama River, was founded by Bartholomew Columbus in 1496; it is the oldest continuously inhabited European settlement in the Americas, and was the first seat of Spanish colonial rule in the New World. The Colonial Zone of Santo Domingo is the oldest part of the city and UNESCO declared it a World Heritage site. Among its most prominent structures are the **Catedral Metropolitana de Santa María de la Encarnación (Holy Mary of the Encarnation)**, the oldest Roman Catholic church in the Americas. The fortress-like castle of Columbus' son, Diego, the Alcázar de Colón, stands on a cliff overlooking the Caribbean.

Construction on the Wall of Santo Domingo began in 1543, under the supervision of Rodrigo de Liendo. The fortified wall stretched west from the Fort of Santo Domingo; it had 20 lookout posts and six entryways. One of these was the Door of San Diego, which today overlooks the Ozama River and the Port of Santo Domingo. Constant pirate attacks made the construction of the Walls of Santo Domingo an important requirement for the growth of the city during the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

**Santiago de los Caballeros** is the nation's second largest city, located in the north-central region, known as the Cibao Valley; it is the capital of Santiago Province. The population of Santiago was 1,329,091 in 2002 (census). Other major cities are San Felipe de Puerto Plata (277,981 = 2002 census), La Ramona (268,987), San Cristóbal (220,767), Concepción de la Vega (220,279), San Pedro de Macorís (217,141), Los Alcarrizos (199,611), and San Francisco de Macorís (198,068). In 2008, 69 percent of the population was urban.

The Dominican Republic has the second largest **economy** in the Caribbean and Central American region. Though long known for sugar production, the economy is now dominated by the service sector. The country's economic progress is exemplified by its advanced telecommunication system. Nevertheless, unemployment, government corruption, and inconsistent electric service remain major Dominican problems. The country also has "marked income inequality." The

instability of the sugar market has kept the country in crisis, and changes of government have been frequent. A democratic government with regular elections has been in place since 1966, but it is threatened constantly by corruption, massive poverty and labor unrest.

**The nation is primarily dependent on natural resources and government services.** Although the service sector has recently overtaken agriculture as the leading employer of Dominicans (due principally to growth in tourism and Free Trade Zones), agriculture remains the most important sector in terms of domestic consumption and is in second place, behind mining, in terms of export earnings. The service sector in general has experienced growth in recent years, as has construction. Free Trade Zone earnings and tourism are the fastest-growing export sectors. Real estate tourism alone accounted for \$1.5 billion in earnings for 2007. Remittances from Dominicans living abroad amounted to nearly \$3.2 billion in 2007.

The Dominican Republic is the largest producer of cigars in the world. Dominican cigar products include a wide variety of aromas, colors and prices. Providing the ideal growing environment, the majority of cigars are produced in the fertile Cibao Valley. In fact, at one time, the country reported more than 600,000 acres in tobacco plants used to produce cigars and cigarettes.

The Dominican Republic has become the **Caribbean's largest tourist destination**; the country's year-round golf courses are among the top attractions, along with its remarkable beach resorts. In 2002 more than 3,000,000 tourists visited the country. Slightly more than half were European (mainly Germans, Italians and Spaniards), while the remainder came from Canada and, to a lesser degree, from the USA.

The Dominican Republic's most important trading partner is the U.S. (about 75 percent of export revenues); other major markets include Canada, Western Europe and Japan. The country exports free-trade-zone manufactured products (garments, medical devices, etc.), nickel, sugar, coffee, cacao and tobacco. Its major imports are petroleum, industrial raw materials, capital goods and foodstuffs. On 5 September 2005, the Dominican Congress ratified a free trade agreement (FTA) with the U.S. and five Central American countries, known as CAFTA-DR. This FTA agreement entered into force for the Dominican Republic 1 March 2007. The total stock of U.S. foreign direct investment (FDI) in Dominican Republic as of 2006 was U.S. \$3.3 billion, with much of it directed to the energy and tourism sectors, to free trade zones, and to the telecommunications sector.

**The nation is almost entirely Spanish-speaking.** Due to long-standing and ongoing immigration from Haiti, Haitian Creole is spoken by several hundred thousand Haitian immigrants and their descendants. French is also spoken by many people, mainly among the Haitian immigrants. There is a community of about 8,000 speakers of English Creole in the Samaná Peninsula, where descendants of former African slaves arrived from the U.S. in the early 19th century. International tourism, U.S. pop culture, the influence of the Dominican population resident in the U.S., and the country's economic ties with the U.S. have motivated many Dominicans to learn English.

**The ethnic composition** of the Dominican population is estimated to be 73 percent multiracial, 16 percent white, and 11 percent black. The multiracial population is primarily a mixture of European and African, but there is a significant Taíno Amerindian element in the population;

recent research has shown that at least 15 percent of Dominicans have Taíno ancestry. The country's population also includes a large **Haitian minority**. Other ethnic groups in the country include Middle Easterners (mostly Lebanese, Syrians and Palestinians), East Asians (primarily ethnic Chinese and Japanese), Europeans (mostly Spanish, German Jews, Italians, Portuguese, British, Dutch, Danes and Hungarians) and tens of thousands of U.S. citizens. Before and during World War II, an estimated 800 Jewish refugees relocated in the Dominican Republic.

In the 20th century, many **Arabs** (primarily from Lebanon, Syria and Palestine), **Japanese**, and, to a lesser degree, **Koreans** settled in the country as agricultural laborers and merchants. The **Chinese**, who were fleeing the Chinese Communist People's Liberation Army (PLA), found work in mines and building railroads. The current Chinese Dominican population totals about 50,000. The Arab community numbers about 3,400. Japanese immigrants, who mostly work in the business districts and markets, are estimated at 1,900. The Korean presence is minor but evident, with a population of only about 500.

In addition, there are descendants of immigrants who came from other Caribbean islands, including St. Kitts and Nevis, Dominica, Antigua, St. Vincent, Montserrat, Tortola, St. Croix, St. Thomas, Martinique, and Guadeloupe. They worked on sugarcane plantations and docks and settled mainly in the cities of San Pedro de Macorís and Puerto Plata. Today, they are believed to number about 28,000.

As elsewhere in the Spanish Empire, the Spanish colony of Hispaniola employed a social system known as *casta*, wherein Peninsulares (Spaniards born in Spain) occupied the highest echelon. These were followed, in descending order of status, by: criollos, castizos, mestizos, mulattoes, Indians, zambos, and black slaves. The stigma of this stratification persisted, reaching its culmination in the Trujillo regime, as the dictator used racial persecution and nationalistic fervor against Haitians.

According to a study by the CUNY Dominican Studies Institute, about 90% of the contemporary Dominican population has African ancestry. However, most Dominicans do not self-identify as black, in contrast to people of African ancestry in other countries. A variety of terms are used to represent a range of skintones, such as *morena* (brown), *canela* (red/brown) ["cinnamon"], *india* (Indian), *blanca oscura* (dark white), and *trigueño* (literally "wheat colored", which is the English equivalent of olive skin), among others.

Many have claimed that this represents a reluctance to self-identify with African descent and the culture of the freed slaves. According to Dr. Miguel Anibal Perdomo, professor of Dominican Identity and Literature at Hunter College in New York City, "There was a sense of 'deculturación' among the African slaves of Hispaniola. [There was] an attempt to erase any vestiges of African culture from the Dominican Republic. We were, in some way, brainwashed and we've become westernized."

Source: <http://www.luperonhills.com/dominican+republic/demographics.htm>

**International migration** greatly affects the country because it receives and sends large flows of migrants. Haitian immigration and the integration of Dominicans of Haitian descent are major national issues. An estimated one million residents are Haitians, most of them without visas, many without passports, and some with no identity papers whatsoever. The deportation of Haitians from the Dominican Republic has been condemned by some human rights groups because of a lack of due legal process. A large Dominican diaspora exists, most of it in the USA.

Dominicans abroad aid national development by sending billions of dollars to their families in the DR, which accounts for one-tenth of the Dominican GDP.

The first of three, late-20th century emigration waves began in 1961, following the assassination of the nation's brutal dictator, **General Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina**. Many people were fearful of retaliation by Trujillo's allies and of political uncertainty in general. In 1965, the U.S. military began an occupation of the Dominican Republic to end a civil war. At that time, the U.S. government eased travel restrictions, which made it easier for Dominicans to obtain U.S. visas.

From 1966 to 1978, the exodus continued, fueled by high unemployment and political repression. Communities established by the first wave of immigrants to the U.S. created a network that assisted later arrivals. In the early 1980s, underemployment, inflation, and the rise in value of the dollar all contributed to a third wave of emigration from the island nation.

Today, emigration from the Dominican Republic remains high. In 2006, there were approximately 1.3 million people of Dominican descent in the U.S., counting both native-born and foreign-born.

**Music and sport** are of the highest importance in Dominican culture, with *merengue* as the national dance and song and baseball as the favorite sport. The country has a baseball league of six teams. Many Major League Baseball players in the USA were born in the DR. The Dominican Republic also regards soccer as its third most popular sport, after baseball and basketball.

**The Constitution of the Dominican Republic** defines the governmental system as being democratic, republican and presidential. The exercise of power is divided among three independent branches: the executive, legislative and judicial. **The Executive** has long been the dominant branch: the president is both the Head of State and the Head of Government, and is Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. The President and Vice President are elected on the same ticket by popular vote for a four-year term, and they can be re-elected only for a consecutive period, according to the last amendment made to the Constitution in 2002.

**The Legislative Power** is invested in the National Congress, composed by two chambers: the Senate is composed of 32 Senators and the Chamber of Deputies by 178 Congressman. The members of the legislative branch are elected every four years through a direct vote of the population by proportional representation in each of the provinces.

**The Judicial Power** is charged of administering justice in order to ensure the respect, protection and supervision of rights recognized under the Constitution and laws. Its highest body is the Supreme Court of Justice, which is composed of 16 judges appointed by the National Council of Magistrates, an entity created by the constitutional reform of 1994 to ensure the independence of the Judicial Branch.

Congress authorizes a combined **military force** of 44,000 active duty personnel, although actual active duty strength is approximately 32,000. However, approximately 50 percent of those are used for non-military activities such as security providers for government-owned non-military facilities, highway toll stations, prisons, forestry work, state enterprises, and private businesses.

The principal mission of the military is to defend the nation and protect the territorial integrity of the country. The Army, larger than the other services combined with approximately 20,000 active duty personnel, consists of six infantry brigades, a combat support brigade, and a combat service support brigade. The Air Force operates two main bases, one in the southern region near Santo Domingo and one in the northern region near Puerto Plata. The Navy operates two major naval bases, one in Santo Domingo and one in Las Calderas on the southwestern coast, and maintains 12 operational vessels. In the Caribbean, only Cuba has a larger military force.

**The Dominican National Police force** contains about 32,000 agents. The police are not part of the Dominican armed forces but share some overlapping security functions. Sixty-three percent of the public security force serve in areas outside traditional police functions, similar to the situation of their military counterparts.

Despite steady economic growth that has benefited a very small number of Dominicans, more than 25 percent of the population—or about 2 million of the country's 9.3 million people in 2002—still live in poverty. Unemployment and inflation are rampant. The richest 10 percent of Dominicans earn nearly 40 percent of the national income, while 20 percent of Dominicans have no access to healthcare or even basic public services, including clean drinking water and sewage disposal.

Perhaps the most marginalized people within the Dominican economy and the most vulnerable to human rights violations are Haitian migrants and Dominicans of Haitian descent who live in rural areas, border towns and a growing number of urban shantytowns. In an effort to flee dire poverty and high unemployment, an estimated one million Haitians have relocated to the Dominican Republic. The steady migration through the years has caused tension between Haitians and Dominicans and posed challenges to the country's economy.

### **Current Religious Situation**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and other laws and policies contribute to the generally free practice of religion. The law at all levels protects this right in full against abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The nation's largest religious group is the Roman Catholic Church. Traditional Protestants, evangelical Christians (particularly Assemblies of God, Church of God, Baptists and Pentecostals) and Seventh-day Adventists have a growing presence, along with the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), and other marginal Christian groups. In addition, numerous non-Christian religions exist in the country, especially among immigrants.

According to a 2006 population survey by the Gallup Organization, 68.9 percent of the population was Roman Catholic: 39.8 percent were practicing Catholics and 29.1 percent were non-practicing Catholics. The Protestant population was 18.2 percent, while 10.6 percent stated they had no religion and 2.3 percent claimed to be adherents of other religions. At that time, the **Dominican Confederation of Evangelical Unity** (*Confederación Dominicana de Unidad Evangélica*, CODUE) claimed that evangelicals represented between 16 and 20 percent of the population.

Many Roman Catholics also practice a syncretism of Catholicism and Afro-Caribbean beliefs, such as Santería (popular in Cuba and Puerto Rico), witchcraft (brujería, popular in the English-speaking Caribbean), or Vodou (rará/gaga, popular in Haiti). However, since these practices are usually conducted in secret, the number of actual adherents is unknown.

### **Historical Overview of Social, Political and Religious Development**

The island of Hispaniola was originally inhabited by several native Caribbean peoples: the Lucayos, the Ciguayos, the Tainos, and the Caribs. Spanish historian Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo (b.1478–d.1557) and **Friar Bartolomé de Las Casas** (b.1474–d.1566) documented that the island originally was called *Haití* ("mountainous land") by the Taíno. Christopher Columbus renamed the island *La Isla Española*, meaning "The Spanish Island," when he landed there in 1492. Later, the name was shortened to *Española* ("Hispaniola" in English).

In 1492, Columbus and his crew founded the settlement of *La Navidad* on the north coast of present-day Haiti. On his return trip to Hispaniola in 1493, following the disbandment of *La Navidad*, Columbus quickly founded a second settlement farther east in present-day Dominican Republic, called *La Isabela*, which became the first permanent European settlement in the Americas.

The Spanish colonists subsequently enslaved the island's Native American residents, almost annihilating them, in a quest to exploit the gold deposits found in the island's rivers, while establishing permanent settlements and ensuring their survival. Seeing the inability of the native peoples to survive the imposed colonial order, **Friar de Las Casas**, a Roman Catholic priest, suggested to the Spanish Crown that it import African slaves to supply the labor needed to expand Spanish settlement and develop agricultural and livestock production. Some of the first African slaves in the New World were brought to Hispaniola, and some of the first independent African communities appeared there in the 1500s.

Columbus' brother, Bartholomew, was appointed governor of Hispaniola and in 1496 he founded the city of Santo Domingo on the south coast. The capital city quickly became the representative seat of the Spanish royal court and, therefore, a city of power and much influence. However, by 1515, the Spaniards realized the gold deposits of Hispaniola had significantly dwindled. Around this time Herman Cortés discovered silver deposits in Mexico. Upon hearing this news, most Spanish residents of Santo Domingo left for Mexico, while only a few thousand settlers remained. Because of the predominance of livestock, initially introduced by Columbus, these settlers sustained themselves by providing food and leather to Spanish ships passing Hispaniola on their way to the richer colonies on the American mainland. It is during this historical period that the pirates of the Caribbean appeared to prey on Spanish ships.

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**The English seafarer Sir Francis Drake** (1542–1596) devoted his life to fighting against the Spanish and all the lands they controlled. England was at war with Spain for much of Drake's life. The Spanish authorities called him a pirate but in England he was known as a heroic ship's captain, explorer and privateer.

Spanish ships, laden with gold and silver, sailing back from their new conquests in the Americas were extremely attractive targets for Drake's exploits. Drake attacked such ships, and if he was successful in capturing them, took their treasure for himself and for his queen. He also raided Spanish and Portuguese ports in the "New World," in the Atlantic Ocean, and in the Mediterranean Sea.

In January 1586, Sir Francis Drake landed at the Spanish colony of Santo Domingo in the Caribbean and brought the entire city to its knees. His invasion and the resulting destruction weakened Spanish dominion over Hispaniola. For more than 50 years everything was abandoned by the Spaniards and left to the mercy of the pirates. Drake drove the Spanish garrison out of Santo Domingo and burned the city methodically, piece by piece, until he received a ransom of 30,000 crowns. After much persuasion by the town's people, and when there was nothing else to steal, Drake left the city.

The church of Santa María de la Concepción, the first Catholic church founded in the new world, was ransacked and burned. Its treasures were stolen and its records destroyed. The graveyard behind the chapel and its records were also destroyed, leaving no record of who was buried there. The Monastery of San Francisco was also significantly damaged by Drake's men during the invasion on the city.

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Hispaniola, valued as a strategic point between Europe and Central and South America, was coveted by both the British and French. The French conquered the western half of the island, which they renamed Haiti in 1686. The whole island became French for a period, but was lost to a short-lived African American republic. Spain recovered the territory of the present-day Dominican Republic in 1809.

Tobacco initially formed the main cash crop on Hispaniola until the government encouraged the establishment of sugarcane plantations after 1697 when the Treaty of Ryswyck was signed, which ended the Nine Years' War between France and the English-Dutch-Spanish alliance. The western third of Hispaniola became a French possession called Saint Domingue in 1697, and over the next century developed into what became, by far, one of its richest colonies. The wealth of the colony derived predominantly from sugarcane production and export. Large plantations were worked by hundreds of thousands of African slaves who were imported to the island. However, it was the Spanish settlers who first brought slaves from Africa to the colony of Santo Domingo in 1501.

After three centuries of Spanish rule, with French and Haitian interludes, the country became independent in 1821 but was quickly taken over by Haiti. On 27 February 1844, the eastern side of the island declared independence and gave their land the name "Dominican Republic." Victorious in the **War of Independence in 1844**, Dominicans experienced mostly internal strife, and also a brief return to Spanish rule (1861-1865), during the next 72 years. The nation floundered under corrupt, incompetent and cruel dictatorships. The Dominican political record during this period was as dismal as the Haitian experience.

During the 19th century the country's economy shifted from sugar production and ranching to other sources of revenue. In the southwestern region, a new industry arose with the cutting down and exporting of precious woods like mahogany, oak and guayacán. In the northern plains and valleys around Santiago de los Caballeros, industry focused on growing tobacco and coffee.

However, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the sugar industry was revived, and so many U.S. companies went to the Dominican Republic to buy plantations that they came to dominate this vital sector of the economy.

In 1916, the U.S. government and business leaders wanted to expand their influence and power in the Dominican Republic for their own profit, so they used the First World War as an excuse to bring in U.S. Marines to protect the DR against vulnerability to large European powers such as Germany. They had used this argument just prior to sending in U.S. Marines to occupy Haiti (1915-1934).

The U.S. occupation of the Dominican Republic lasted eight years, and from the very beginning the Americans quickly took over complete control. They ordered the disbanding of the Dominican Army and forced the population to disarm. A puppet government was installed and obliged to obey orders from the occupying U.S. Marine commanders. A restructuring of the legal system took place in order to benefit U.S. investors, which allowed them to take control of greater sectors of the economy and remove customs and import barriers for any U.S. products being brought into the country. Although many Dominican businessmen experienced losses due to these changes, the political violence was eliminated and many improvements in the Dominican Republic's infrastructure and educational system were introduced.

The U.S. military occupation of 1916–1924 and a subsequent, calm and prosperous six-year period under **President Horacio Vásquez Lajara** were followed by the brutal dictatorship of **General Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina** (b.1891-d.1961) of the **Dominican Party**, founded in 1930. The Trujillo Era (1931-1961) was considered one of the bloodiest of the 20th century in Latin America.

In 1916, the U.S. government sent a naval force to occupy the nation allegedly because the Dominican government threatened to default on its foreign debts. The occupying force soon established a Dominican constabulary to restore public order. Seeing an opportunity for personal advancement, young Trujillo joined the newly-established National Guard in 1918, and was soon promoted through the ranks of the **Dominican National Guard and Police**. When the U.S. Marines left the island in 1924, the 33-year-old Major Trujillo became head of the National Police. In 1927 Trujillo was promoted to Brigadier General in the National Police, which was transformed into the National Army the following year with Trujillo as its Commander-in-Chief.

In 1930, a rebellion against **President Horacio Vásquez Lajara** (National Party, governed during 1902-1903 and from 1924-1930) broke out in **Santiago de los Caballeros** and the rebels marched toward Santo Domingo. Gen. Trujillo was ordered to subdue the rebellion, but when the mutineers arrived at the capital on 26 February, they encountered no resistance. Rebel leader Rafael Estrella was proclaimed “acting president” after Vásquez resigned. Trujillo then became the nominee of the newly-formed **Dominican Party** in the 1930 presidential election. He was declared the winner on 16 May, officially registering 95 percent of the vote; this massive victory could have been obtained only by means of massive fraud. A judge actually declared the election fraudulent, but he was forced to flee the country. Later, it was alleged that Trujillo had received thousands more votes than there were actual voters.

On 16 August 1930, the 38-year-old general took office, wearing a sash with the motto, *Dios y Trujillo* (“God & Trujillo”). He immediately assumed dictatorial powers and controlled the nation ruthlessly until his assassination in May 1961. At that time it was learned that he personally owned 70 percent of the country’s arable land. Before other political factions could get their people in power, **Rafael Trujillo, Jr.**, rushed home from France and installed himself as the country's new ruler. Over the next six months he executed all of his known opponents.

For a long time, the U.S. government supported the Trujillo regime, as did the Roman Catholic Church and the Dominican elite. This support persisted despite massive corruption, the assassinations of political opposition, the massacre of Haitians (an estimated 20,000 Haitians were killed in 1937 by his troops), and Trujillo's plots against other countries. The U.S. government believed that Gen. Trujillo was the lesser of two or more evils as a staunch enemy of the spread of Marxism from Cuba to other parts of Latin America during the Cold War. The U.S. finally broke with Gen. Trujillo in 1960, after Trujillo's agents attempted to assassinate Venezuelan President Rómulo Betancourt, who was a fierce critic of Trujillo.

The Dominican Republic never had a plantation economy, whereas Haiti, on the western side of the island, did have such a system with black slave labor. Most common folk in the Dominican Republic were subsistence farmers, and there had been mixing between the races. But Gen. Trujillo wanted his fellow Dominicans to think of themselves as white, in contrast to Haiti, which was predominately black. In 1937 Trujillo whipped up anti-Haitian fears and massacred thousands of blacks. Under his leadership history was rewritten, describing the Haitians as villains and the Dominicans as white. Mixed Dominicans were defined as Indians (the Indians, however, having been annihilated long before), and Trujillo purged the use of the African hand drum from *merengue* bands and he banned Vodou ceremonies.

When Gen. Trujillo arranged to have his brother Héctor (president from 1952-1960) re-elected to the presidency in 1957, he chose **Joachín Balaguer Ricardo** as vice-president. Three years later, when pressure from the Organization of American States (OAS) convinced the dictator that it was inappropriate to have a member of his family as president, Trujillo forced his brother to resign and Balaguer succeeded him. However, he had virtually no power, and was regarded as a mere puppet to Gen. Trujillo.

The situation was dramatically altered, however, when Gen. Trujillo was assassinated in 1961. Although he had long been associated with *El Benefactor*, Balaguer took steps to liberalize the regime, granting some civil liberties and easing Trujillo's tight censorship of the press. However, Balaguer's tentative reforms were too much for the hard-line *trujillistas* and didn't go nearly far enough for those who wanted more freedom and a more equal distribution of wealth.

U.S. President John F. Kennedy (Democratic Party) favored **Balaguer** as the temporary ruler of the Dominican Republic. Kennedy remarked at the time: "Balaguer is our only tool. The anti-communist liberals are not strong enough. We must use our influence to take Balaguer along the road to democracy." To reinforce this policy a U.S. naval task force with 1,800 Marines appeared off the Dominican coast on 19 November 1961. As a result **Rafael Trujillo, Jr.**, and his supporters left the country for exile elsewhere.

Due to the pressure exerted by the National Civic Union, a Council of State was created and Balaguer only retained power until 16 January 1962, when a military coup, led by Air Force Chief Rodríguez Echaverría, forced him into exile in New York and Puerto Rico.

**Juan Emilio Bosch y Gaviño** (b.1909-d.2001) (*Partido Revolucionario Dominicano*, PRD) was elected as the new president and took power in February 1963. Bosch, a Social Democrat, was a writer and an academic who had spent years in exile as an activist opposed to the Trujillo regime. However, he was more left-wing than Kennedy and his Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) could tolerate. Bosch immediately announced an energetic program of public works, land reform, low-rent housing and the nationalization of selected businesses. He also proclaimed that communists and socialists would not be persecuted as long as they obeyed the law. The conservative U.S. media now began comparing Bosch to Fidel Castro in Cuba (the Cuban Revolution took place between 1956 and 1959). For example, the *Miami News* reported that, "Communist penetration of the Dominican Republic is progressing with incredible speed and efficiency."

Many Dominican businessmen did not like Bosch, nor did leading members of the Catholic Church. The republic's new constitution provided for the separation of Church and State. Divorces were now legal, and religious schools were obliged to be open for state inspection. Landowners were displeased with Bosch's land program and conservatives disliked the freedom of speech enjoyed by admirers of Castro and other leftists. They were in a panic, believing that Bosch was about to turn their country into another Cuba. U.S. Ambassador Bartlow Marin accused Bosch of being soft on "Castro Communists." Also, Bosch's reorganization of the military displeased high-ranking military officers, who believed that Bosch was establishing his own rival military power.

The CIA then decided to use the Dominican Army to overthrow Bosch. In July 1963, a group of army officers warned Bosch that the military would only continue to support him if he adopted a policy of "rigorous anti-communism." Bosch responded by going on television to announce that in a democratic society the military must remain out of politics. Bosch was overthrown as a result of a military coup in September 1963. *Newsweek Magazine* reported that, "Democracy was being saved from Communism by getting rid of democracy."

The coup effectively negated the 1962 elections by installing a civilian junta, known as the "Triunvirato," dominated by the Trujullista remnants. The initial head of the Triumvirate was **Donald Reid Cabral**. The Triumvirate never succeeded in establishing its authority over competing conservative factions both inside and outside the military; it also never convinced the majority of the population of its legitimacy. The widespread dissatisfaction with Reid and his government, coupled with lingering loyalties to Bosch, produced a violent revolution that began on 16 May 1965.

The vanguard of the 1965 Revolution, the *perredeistas* (members of the PRD) and other supporters of Bosch, called themselves **Constitutionalists**, a reference to their support for the 1963 Constitution. The movement counted some junior military officers among its ranks. A combination of reformist military and aroused civilian combatants took to the streets on 24 April, seized the National Palace, and installed **Rafael Molina Ureña** as provisional president. The revolution took on the dimensions of a civil war when conservative military forces, led by Army **Gen. Elías Wessin y Wessin**, struck back against the Constitutionalists on 25 April. These conservative

forces called themselves **Loyalists**. Despite tank assaults and bombing runs by Loyalist forces, however, the Constitutionals held their positions in the capital; they appeared poised to branch out and to secure control of the entire country.

On 28 April 1965, the U.S. government intervened in the civil war: **President Lyndon B. Johnson** ordered in U.S. military forces, which eventually totaled 20,000 Marines, to secure Santo Domingo and to restore order. Johnson had acted in the stated belief that the Constitutionals were dominated by communists and that they therefore could not be allowed to come to power. The intervention was subsequently granted some measure of hemispheric approval by the creation of an OAS-sponsored peace force, which supplemented the U.S. military presence in the republic. An initial interim government was headed by one of the assassins of Trujillo, Antonio Imbert Barrera; later, **Héctor García Godoy** assumed a provisional presidency on 3 September 1965. Violent skirmishes between Loyalists and Constitutionals went on sporadically as, once again, elections were organized.

**The Dominican civil war of 1965** (April to September), the country's last, ended with the U.S.-led intervention and was followed by the authoritarian rule of **President Balaguer** (PRSC): 1966-1978 and 1986-1996. Since then, the nation has moved toward representative democracy.

During the authoritarian 12-year rule of **President Balaguer** (1966-1978), the U.S.-backed strongman sought to physically annihilate leftists in reaction to the radicalization of thousands of young people during and after the 1965 revolution. These 12 years are considered to be one of the darkest periods in the history of the country; more than 3,000 people were murdered by the right-wing paramilitary forces of the Balaguer regime.

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The 1960s witnessed the transition from 31 years of dictatorship to more democratic forms of government, although this process was interrupted by the U.S. military invasion of 1965, which prevented a broad spectrum of progressive political forces from taking control of the country. This profoundly disruptive period created a climate that tended to politicize all action by cultural, religious, professional and labor organizations. As the predominant tendency in Dominican society was to look to these organizations as political and ideological reference points, the Cultural Clubs became the focus of significant power struggles among the various political and ideological currents prevalent in Dominican society at the time. Perhaps most significantly, this political emphasis was expressed in the propensity to link action immediately to an overall political line, without working towards raising local issues in a way that would involve the population in solving its own problems.

Although largely subordinated to the logic of centrist and left-wing political parties, and under the effects of the **heavy repression** that characterized this period, the Clubs played a very important role in organizing protests and social and political struggles during the 12-year right-wing Reformist Party government of Joaquín Balaguer between 1966 and 1978.

In 1978, the centrist Revolutionary Dominican Party (PRD) won the elections [**President Antonio Guzmán Fernández**, 1978-1982], opening up a new political situation. The PRD managed to win over several groups that had been important agents of social change, in particular the Clubs and labor unions, with their base among the poor and marginal sectors, and turned them into loyal supporters of the system and the government. The unity of the opposition was broken. Because of the fragmentation of the

opposition and because of a pact with the ruling economic sector, which had been important for the PRD's accession to power, during the party's two terms (1978–1982, 1982-1986) government policies ignored popular demands and repression of protest was frequent.

A turning point in popular mobilization began to occur in 1983 with government cut-backs on social spending as part of an agreement with the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**. This intensified the economic and political crisis and increased social inequality and spatial segregation, which in turn rekindled organizational efforts in the neighborhoods. The popular sector began to raise certain demands, this time without help from the large parties in the system. The tendency to raise demands outside a party framework was significantly furthered by the crisis in the left (the traditional, strong standard-bearer of protest in the country). It was also furthered by the hesitancy of other opposition parties, including the center-left Dominican Liberation Party (PLD) headed by former President Juan Bosch, which lacked a tradition of mobilization and ties to the popular sectors. Such a situation heightened the inclination for grievances to be channeled independently of the parties rather than through them, as had happened in previous decades, and eventually to replace party loyalty by developing new means of struggle.

The result was to stimulate the creation of popular organizations that had different attitudes from those of earlier years. By the early 1980s several new efforts at organization had cropped up in the neighborhoods. These were encouraged by youth in **Catholic-sponsored Christian Base Communities**, ex-activists and members of left-wing organizations, and members of the PRD rank and file who favored the formation of Neighborhood Councils to raise specific demands.

The most violent national protests, which included rock-throwing, tire-burning, firebombing and looting, took place in April 1984, reaching their peak between April 23 and 25. Such protests, which focused on salaries, inflation and the cost of living, continued throughout the 1980s and included five national shutdowns or strikes. Following these incidents, the need for and possibility of coordinating a movement at the local, regional and national levels were posed. The protest had been put down in a virtual bloodbath; according to press reports, more than 100 people were killed by army bullets.

In social and popular imagery, the April 1984 street uprising became a symbol of revolt which deepened the tendency of Dominican political culture and practice to politicize social issues. To left-wing organizations, whatever legitimacy the state and the traditional parties had ever had was lost in these events. They regarded their aftermath as an auspicious moment to bring about the breakdown of the system through the work of neighborhood organizations, and set out to push this understanding within the protest movement. This led the **Dominican Left Front** (FID, comprising several small left-wing parties) to call for “forming Popular Struggle Committees the length and breadth of the country, for all the exploited to join the mobilization, from the bottom up, and to coordinate all sectors that make up the power base and the popular forces that can defeat official intolerance and the power of the dominant minority.”

The Communist Workers' Party (PCT - Partido Comunista del Trabajo, a pro-Albanian organization), which did not belong to the FID, also called for the formation of Popular Struggle Committees, because “they are the conveyor belts between the party and the masses, and in them the close union of the party and the people will become effective.”

The labor movement, weakened by division into numerous federations, low worker affiliation and the massive layoffs caused by harsh fiscal policy, also regarded the territorial and community stage as a place to organize for advancing class grievances, something that was becoming increasingly harder to do on the shop floor.

Source: [http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-54438-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-54438-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html)

Some political scientists argue that the Guzmán administration (1978-1982) represented a bridge between lingering post-Trujillo authoritarianism and a more liberal, democratic style of politics and government. Guzmán's professionalization of the military was a significant contribution to this process. Although the Dominican economic situation plagued him, Guzmán handled matters with sufficient competence to allow for the election of **Salvador Jorge Blanco** on the PRD ticket in May 1982.

The **Social Christian Reformist Party** (*Partido Reformista Social Cristiano*, PRSC) is a conservative populist party formed in 1986 by the union of the **Reformist Party** (*Partido Reformista*, established in the 1964-1965 by Balaguer who was, at the time, exiled in New York City) and the **Social Christian Revolutionary Party** (*Partido Revolucionario Social Cristiano*), founded in 1962. Some of the PRSC's founders and leaders were originally Roman Catholic business leaders who opposed the Democratic Socialist tendencies of **Juan Bosch** of the **Dominican Revolutionary Party** (*Partido Revolucionario Dominicano*, PRD), who later founded the **Party of Dominican Liberation** (*Partido de la Liberación Dominicana*, PLD) in 1973. The PRD was founded in 1939 by Dominican exiles in Havana, Cuba, led by **Juan Bosch**; and it was then established in the Dominican Republic in 1961.

However, as is the case with most party politics in the Dominican Republic, the PRSC remains pragmatically populist. The founders of the original PRSC (formerly *Partido Revolucionario Social Cristiano*) were anti-trujillistas, among others: Alfonso Moreno Martinez, Mario Read Vitti, Yuyo D'Alessandro, and Caonabo Javier Castillo, all of whom returned to the DR from political exile. Years later this political party and the Reformed Party united to form the current *Partido Refomista Social Cristiano* (same acronym, PRSC).

Populism in the DR means that candidates win by impressing the majority of the people with promises and personal charisma. Individuals vote based on the likelihood that their personal position will be improved by their vote. The State is poor but paternalistic, and so limited government resources – in the shape of employment opportunities, public works, funding and free food – are to a certain extent passed out based on party membership, as in many other Latin American countries.

Another important characteristic of DR politics is the predominance of strong charismatic leaders instead of ideology. **Balaguer** (PRSC) assembled a party machine that helped decide elections even after he was out of power and ill. However, at the legislative elections of May 2002, the PRSC only won 24.3 percent of the popular vote and 36 out of 150 seats in the Chamber of Deputies (Congress), and only two out of 31 seats in the Senate. Its candidate in the presidential election of May 2004 was Eduardo Estrella, who only won 8.6 percent of the popular vote.

Regardless of the political party in power, the subordinate role of the working class in Dominican society has changed little, despite the industrialization process initiated in the 1940s and expanded in the late 1960s, and despite the establishment of a democratic government in 1978. Both under authoritarian and democratic rule the Dominican labor movement has been a weak political force, largely excluded from the economic and political benefits associated with industrialization and the democratization of politics.

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As of 1989, trade unions had not played the consistently strong role in the political system that the economic elites had. Only a small percentage (5 to 7 percent) of the population (12 to 15 percent of the labor force) belonged to labor unions in the late 1980s, and the unions themselves tended to be internally fragmented and weak.

The trade unions were also inclined to be highly political; most were associated with the major political parties. There were a Christian Democratic trade union group, a communist labor organization, a group of unions associated with the PRD, an organization for government workers, a teachers' union, and one relatively nonpartisan group. The several union groups conflicted as often with each other as with management.

Since most Dominicans earned very low salaries, the unions could not support themselves, or very many of their activities, on the basis of union dues. Several of the major groups received funding from outside the country. In addition, because the country typically had high rates of unemployment and underemployment and a surplus of unskilled labor, employers often replaced workers who tried to organize. Sometimes employers engaged in what could be described as union-breaking activities, including the summoning of the police to put down union activities. These and other conditions both weakened and politicized the labor movement. Although collective bargaining had gained popularity and legitimacy, political action was still more widely used by the unions to satisfy their demands. Political action might take the form of street demonstrations, violence, marches to the National Palace, and general strikes—all meant to put pressure on the government to side with the workers in labor disputes. In extreme cases, a general strike might be called in an effort to topple a government or a labor minister deemed insufficiently receptive to labor's demands.

Source: [http://www.mongabay.com/reference/country\\_studies/dominican-republic/GOVERNMENT.html](http://www.mongabay.com/reference/country_studies/dominican-republic/GOVERNMENT.html)

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**Leonel Antonio Fernández Reyna** (b. 1953) is the current President of the Dominican Republic. He is serving his second consecutive term in office (2004-2008, 2008-2012); he was also President between 1996 and 2000. Fernández is the leader of the PLD, which has a center-left, Social Democratic ideology.

The PRD won the national presidential elections in 1962 with **Juan Bosch** (he took office in February 1963 and was deposed in a military coup in September 1963, and later left the PRD and formed the PLD in 1973). The PRD won the presidential election in 1978 with **Antonio Guzmán Fernández**, in 1982 with **Salvador Jorge Blanco**, and in 2000 with **Rafael Hipólito Mejía Domínguez** (who succeeded President Fernández who, at that time, was prohibited by the Constitution from serving two consecutive presidential terms).

Domestic and international observers saw the **1996 election** as transparent and fair. After the first round, the PRSC with Joaquín Balaguer endorsed Leonel Fernández (PLD), who won a tight victory over the PRD candidate, José Francisco Peña Gómez. The transition from incumbent administration to incoming administration was smooth and ushered in a new, modern era in Dominican political life, in which three major political parties have dominated the elections: PRSC, PRD and PLD.

Fernández' political agenda (1996-2000) was one of economic and judicial reform. He helped enhance Dominican participation in hemispheric affairs, such as the OAS and the follow up to the

Miami Summit. On 16 May 2000, Hipólito Mejía (PRD) was elected president in another free and fair election. He defeated PLD candidate Danilo Medina by 49.8 percent to 24.8 percent of the vote. Mejía entered office on 16 August with four priorities: education reform, economic development, increased agricultural production and poverty alleviation. Mejía also championed the cause of Central American and Caribbean economic integration and migration, particularly as it related to Haiti. In May 2004, Leonel Fernández (PLD) received 57 percent of the vote, and in May 2008 he won again with 54 percent of the vote for a second consecutive term in office.

## **The Roman Catholic Church**

The European presence on Hispaniola destroyed decimated the Native American people and their religion, which was replaced with Christianity. The area that was to later become the Dominican Republic became the early center of the Roman Catholic Church, and the first bishopric in the Americas was established there in 1511.

In 1496, Bartolomé Colón founded the settlement of Nueva Isabella, which not long afterwards was replaced by Santo Domingo de Guzmán, at the mouth of the Ozamas River, on the south coast. Thus, the present capital of the Dominican Republic, the oldest European city in the New World, was already established as the capital of "New Spain" in the last year of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Pope Leo X erected the "see of San Domingo" – the mother church of all Spanish America and the oldest bishopric in the New World – in 1513.

Under Alessandro Geraldini, its first bishop, the construction of the **Cathedral of Santa Maria de la Encarnación** began in Santo Domingo in 1514; it was completed more than two decades later, in 1540. The structure has three main entrances. On the north side it features an impressive hand-carved portico. Its Gothic interior is magnificent, featuring the saints that the Spanish Crown once revered.

In 1547, Pope Paul III made San Domingo the metropolitan see of the New World. Meanwhile, convents of the **Franciscans and the Mercedarians** sprang up rapidly in this new port, the population of which never exceeded 20,000 until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The **Imperial Convent of Santo Domingo** was the first convent built in the city of Santo Domingo. Completed in the 16th century, this is the continent's oldest Catholic church still in use. It was built along the late Spanish Gothic style. A vault tops the central aisle which, in turn, is surrounded by five lateral chapels. This convent was the home of Santo Domingo's first university, founded in 1538.

**Universidad Santo Tomás de Aquino** was founded in Santo Domingo by papal bull in 1538 from Pope Paul III, and by royal bull in 1747. The new university emerged from the seminary that the Dominicans had been operating since 1518 in Santo Domingo, the seat of the viceroy and the oldest colony of the New World. The new University was organized in four schools: Medicine, Law, Theology, and Arts. The studies in Arts included the two traditional curricula, namely: the *trivium* consisting of grammar, rhetoric and logic; and the *quadrivium*, which is arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music.

Today, the **Autonomous University of Santo Domingo (Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo)**, founded officially in 1914, claims to be the successor of the Universidad Santo Tomás de Aquino. Due to a 92-year hiatus from 1822 to 1914, it is not the oldest continuously operating university in the Americas. Many historians suggest that the **Universidad Santo Tomás de Aquino** (Universidad de Santo Domingo) and the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo are actually different universities.

**The Colegio de Gorjón (Gorjón College)** is a 16th century building, named after its promoter, a rich landowner who in 1537 began the process to initiate the New World's first "school." The school was finally authorized in 1540 and in 1558 the institution housed the continent's first university. In 1603 it became a seminary, while much later it became the City Hall and then the headquarters for the **Society of Jesus (Jesuit order, S.J.)**.

**The Chapel of the Third Order of the Dominicans (O.P.)** was built in 1729. Its chapel was once part of the structure that was actually a church, a convent and the building that housed the **Universidad Santo Tomás de Aquino**, founded in 1538. The temple's façade is baroque in style, both somber and simple. The temple consists of a central aisle bordered by three lateral chapels.

**The Church of the Company of Jesus** is an impressive structure, which today is home to the National Pantheon, but was originally the Church of the Jesuits. Built in the 18th century, between 1792 and 1796, it housed the **San Fernando Seminary**. After 1860 it served as a theatre for the independence movement. It was restored in 1950. The country's national heroes are buried here, including presidents and intellectuals.

**During the early Spanish colonial period**, the seeds of social and political decay were being sown in Hispaniola. The aborigines were either killed or driven into hiding among the Cibao Mountains, and the importation of African slaves became institutionalized. The Spanish settlers were mostly common men who lived off of the land; their blood mingled with that of the Negro and, in some degree, the Amerindian, to produce the Dominicans of modern times. Catholicism enjoyed a monopoly in the religious sphere until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and still retains the allegiance of the majority of the people.

**At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century**, the ancient city of Santo Domingo (population 16,000) remained the seat of the civil government, as well as the "see" of the **Archdiocese of Santo Domingo**, which included the entire nation. The relationship between the Church and the State was very cordial. The Constitution of the Republic, in which religious liberty was an article, guaranteed the Church freedom of action but was, nevertheless, curtailed by the law providing that the civil solemnization of marriages must precede the canonical. The municipal cemeteries were consecrated in accordance with the Church's requirements, although in some important population centers non-Catholic cemeteries also existed.

**In 1908**, the Dominican Republic included an estimated 600,000 Roman Catholics, more than 1,000 Protestants, and very few Jews, while the Masonic lodges numbered about thirteen. The total number of Catholic parishes was 56, each with its own church, in addition to which there were 13 chapels and 82 mission stations. The Conciliar (ecclesiastical) seminary in the capital was under the care of the Eudist Fathers (Congregation of Jesus and Mary) who administered the cathedral parish. Another college under ecclesiastical control was that of San Sebastian in La

Vega. A diocesan congregation of religious women numbered 30 members; these sisters had charge of a hospital and cared for orphan children and the sick elderly people.

In 1959, the territorial organization of the Catholic Church underwent change, which resulted in one archdiocese (Santo Domingo) and three dioceses: La Vega, Santiago de los Caballeros, and Nuestra Señora de Altigracia, along with a missionary prelatore (San Juan de la Maguana – all the priests working there were foreigners). At that time, all the religious priests in the country were foreigners, while about two-thirds of the parish priests were Dominicans. Most of the foreign priests were Spaniards, whereas the predominant nationality of the religious priests was Canadian. One of the weakest aspects in the historical development of the Dominican Catholic Church has been its inability to recruit Dominicans for the priesthood, which has created the impression that the Church is largely a foreign entity and a relic of its Spanish colonial past.

**Today, the Roman Catholic Church** enjoys a special legal status in the country; a Concordat between the Vatican and the Dominican government was finally signed in 1954 with the support of former President Rafael Trujillo, who was invited to have a private interview with Pope Pius XII after the document signing in Rome. Among other privileges, the Catholic Church has access to public funds to cover some of its expenses, including the repair of church buildings and low customs duties on imported church goods. Although the government generally does not interfere with the practice of religion, members of the National Police are required to attend Catholic Mass. Catholic marriage ceremonies are the only religious marriage ceremonies that are recognized by the state, but legal civil marriages are also accepted. Although the Church has long tried to influence legislation against birth control and divorce, Dominican law permits extensive family planning and encourages easy divorce.

The Catholic Church suffered the consequences of a multitude of political troubles in the country over the centuries, which left the archbishopric of Santo Domingo vacant for long periods: 1797-1817, 1830-1848, 1866-1885 and 1932-1935. These periods usually coincided with times of political turmoil, when the Church authorities in Rome were cautious about appointing an archbishop in the DR due to the uncertainties of the winds of change. For example, during a succession of repressive governments, the Dominican archbishop and his bishops were accused of being too lenient and cooperative with tyrannical leaders.

Under Gen. Rafael Trujillo's despotic regime (1931-1961), the power of the Catholic Church was quite limited, but it did achieve some notable advances thanks to certain privileges granted by the government. After President Trujillo assumed office, he supported legislation in Congress that, when approved, restored the Church's legal status, which had been lost in a legal dispute over property rights in 1929. Later, Congress approved the payment of a subsidy to the Church to help it face a critical financial situation during the Great Depression of the 1930s. In addition, the government created a Commission for the Preservation of Monuments and Historical Sites, which provided funding for the repair and maintenance of historical buildings – including many churches and convents. In 1936, the Diplomatic Representative (papal nuncio) of the Vatican and President Trujillo reached an agreement to name Italian Salesian Bishop Richard Pittini as Archbishop of Santo Domingo (1936-1961).

Although the Church remained apolitical during much of the Trujillo era, a 1960 pastoral letter of protest against mass arrests of government opponents seriously strained the Church's relationship

with the government. This action so incensed Trujillo that he ordered a campaign of harassment against the Church. Only the dictator's assassination in 1961 prevented his planned imprisonment of the country's bishops. The papal nuncio's attempts to administer humanitarian aid during the 1965 civil war were hampered as the struggle intensified. For more information about this period, see the following publications: Howard J. Wiarda, "The Changing Political Orientation of the Catholic Church in the Dominican Republic" in *Journal of Church and State* (1965) 7(2): 238-254); and Armano Lampe, *Breve Historia del Cristianismo en el Caribe*, CEHILA, 1997: 100-105).

The bishops also issued various statements throughout the 1970s and the 1980s, calling for respect for human rights and an improved standard of living for the majority. In the 1970s, Bishop Juan Antonio Flores of La Vega campaigned for indemnification for peasants displaced by the expansion of the Pueblo Viejo Mine. Bishop Juan F. Pepen and Bishop Hugo Polanco Brito both supported the efforts of peasants and sugarcane workers to organize.

In the late 1980s, the church organization included one archdiocese, eight dioceses and 250 parishes. There were over 500 clergy, more than 70 percent of whom belonged to religious orders. This yielded a ratio of nominal Roman Catholics to priests of more than 10,000 to 1. Among Latin American countries only Cuba, Honduras and El Salvador had higher ratios in the late 1980s.

Although the majority of Dominicans were professed Roman Catholics, for most of the populace, religious practice was limited and formalistic. Few actually attended Mass regularly. Popular religious practices were frequently far removed from Roman Catholic orthodoxy. What little religious instruction most Dominicans traditionally received came in the form of rote memorization of the catechism. Many people felt that they could best approach God through intermediaries: the clergy, the saints (*santos*), witches (*brujos*), and folk healers (*curanderos*). The saints played an important role in popular devotion. *Curanderos* consulted the spirits (animism) to ascertain which cures to employ. Witches (*brujos*) also cured by allegedly driving out evil spirits that sometimes "possessed" an individual.

Many Dominicans viewed the Catholic clergy with ambivalence. People respected the advice of their local priest, or their bishop, with regard to religious matters; however, they often rejected the advice of clergy on other matters on the assumption that priests had little understanding of secular affairs. Activist priests committed to social reform were not always well-received because their direct involvement with parishioners ran counter to the traditional reserve usually displayed by the Roman Catholic clergy. Villagers often criticized this social involvement. Nonetheless, the priest was generally the only person outside their kinship group that people trusted and in whom they confided. As such, the parish priest often served as an advocate between rural Dominicans and the larger society.

Foreigners predominated among the Catholic clergy. The clergy itself was split between the traditional, conservative hierarchy and more liberal parish priests. At the parish level, some priests engaged in community development projects and in efforts to form *comunidades de base* (grass-roots Christian communities), which were designed to help people organize and work together more effectively in solving community and social problems.

**Diverse tensions arose within the Dominican Catholic Church during the 1960s and following years**, which resulted from challenges posed by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), the Conference of Latin American Bishops held in Medellín (Colombia) in 1968, Latin American Liberation Theology, and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) movement. These powerful new currents polarized Catholic bishops, priests (diocesan and religious), lay brothers and sisters (members of religious orders), and the laity in general into various factions. *Traditionalists* wanted the Church to remain as it was prior to the reforms approved by the Second Vatican Council (mid-1960s), with an emphasis on apostolic authority, orthodox theology, the sacraments and personal piety. *Reformers* generally supported the Church's post-Vatican II stance of modernization and toleration of diversity based on its official Social Doctrine. *Progressives*, inspired by reforms approved at the Vatican II and Medellín conferences, sought to implement the new vision for “a preferential option for the poor” through social and political action aimed at transforming Dominican society and establishing greater social justice through peaceful democratic means. *Radicals* adopted the Marxist-inspired Liberation Theology and advocated violent revolution by the people as a means of overthrowing the rightwing military dictatorships in Latin America and creating a Socialist State that would serve the poor marginalized masses. *Charismatic agents* sought to transform the spiritual and communal life of Catholics by means of the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit (including the “baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues”), rather than by political and social activism.

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Fr. Emiliano Tardif (b.1928-d.1999) was born in Saint-Zacharie, Beauce, Quebec, Canada. He joined the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Quebec at the age of 21 and was ordained a priest on 24 June 1955. In September 1956 he left Canada to be a missionary in the Dominican Republic.

He was first a professor at the junior seminary of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in the Dominican Republic; then he was the director of the magazine for families "Amigo del Hogar" for ten years. In 1965 he was appointed Superior of his Congregation in the Dominican Republic, then the Provincial of the same congregation until June 1973, when he fell sick with pulmonary tuberculosis. He had to go back home to Canada to be urgently hospitalized at the tuberculosis hospital in Quebec. Following several medical tests doctors told him that after one year of treatment he might be able to leave the hospital.

He recalls at that time, “After all those tests were taken on me, even before the physicians started to give me treatment, I received a visit of five lay people from a charismatic prayer group in Quebec. They came and prayed for me in my hospital room and the Lord healed me thoroughly within three or four days. I left the hospital in perfect health, which I still enjoy today!”

After that he started to study the **Catholic Charismatic Renewal** and to take part in retreats and conferences to get to know better this new Pentecost that the Lord has been giving his Church today.

In November 1973, the Lord gave him the charism of healing, which he says, “developed gradually and has been for me a wonderful instrument from the Lord to accompany my evangelization work.” In the following year, 1974, he went back to the Dominican Republic, where he started to work in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, which led him to preaching retreats on the five continents. “The Lord has given me one message only—I have to proclaim that Jesus is risen, that he is present in the Eucharist, and that he has forgiven us. This message will never change, because the Gospel does not change. But, I do try to present that message differently. To a world which speaks of Jesus dead I shout ‘Jesus is Alive.’ And

Jesus confirms this by clear signs. With priests I try to speak more of the spiritual life, but to ordinary people I tend to give the one message 'Jesus is Alive.'”

In April 1975, the Lord also gave him the charism of the word of knowledge, which during the healing service comes to strengthen the faith of the people in the congregation. One healing stands out in his mind from this past year. “One [healing] that affected me deeply was that of an eight-year-old child in Nicaragua, who had never walked because of a paralysis that attacked her when she was only a few months old. Present on that occasion to witness the miracle were about thirty-five thousand people. I believe that the community prayer in a big gathering brings many blessings and great graces.” As of today he has preached in 66 different countries. He says, “I am happy to put my health that the Lord restored in July 1973 at the service of evangelization! (...) All over the world, the Lord manifests his glory by signs and marvels, reminding today's world that Jesus is alive in his Church and still has the same power and the same mercy for those who are suffering.”

Source: <http://www.catholiccharismatic.us/ccc/articles/nonattributed/Profiles/Tardif.html>

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However, Fr. Emiliano Tardif was not the first Catholic Charismatic to minister in the Dominican Republic. In February 1973, at the first meeting of the Latin American Catholic Charismatics (ECCLA I), held in Bogotá, Colombia, Father Francis MacNutt (a Charismatic trailblazer of the Dominican order) held a meeting of 23 priests from Colombia, Mexico, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela and the USA to discuss ways of propagating the CCR throughout the region (source: R. Andrew Chesnut, *Competitive Spirits: Latin America's New Religious Economy*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003: 72). It should be noted that the physical healing of Fr. Emiliano Tardif did not take place until July 1973 in Canada, and that sometime later he returned to the Dominican Republic.

Historically, the Dominican Roman Catholic Church was conservative and traditionalist; in general it supported the status quo and the existing power structure. The Church was weak institutionally, however, with few priests (fewer than 200 in the entire country), little land, few educational or social institutions, and little influence over the daily lives of most Dominicans.

Since the 1960s, the Church has ceased to identify wholly with the status quo. Rather, it tended to stand for moderate change. It organized mainstream Catholic political parties, trade unions, student groups, peasant leagues, and businessmen's associations. However, “Liberation theology” had made few inroads in the Dominican Republic. A few priests espoused liberationist ideas, but they were not considered to be in the mainstream of the clergy, neither had there been calls by church officials for an alliance with Marxist groups, let alone calls for guerrilla struggles or other militant action against the system.

**As the Dominican Republic modernized and secularized, the church lost some of its influence.** The country legalized divorce in 1963 and instituted government-sponsored family planning in 1967, two measures the Church had strongly opposed. The Church seldom succeeded in mobilizing voters in support of its favored programs. With only about 10 percent of the population considered active, practicing Catholics, and with Protestant groups continuing to grow rapidly, political scientists estimated that the Church had gone from being one of the top three

most influential interest groups in past decades, to about the sixth or the seventh by the late-1980s.

**Catholic Relief Services (CRS) initiated programs in the Dominican Republic in 1961** at the invitation of the Dominican Catholic Episcopal Conference. Its vision is to create a culture of peace, justice and respect for human dignity. Its mission is to strengthen civil society, especially the empowerment of local communities that are struggling to overcome a long history of injustice and marginalization. CRS has implemented a wide array of programs in the areas of community development, health, emergency assistance and peace-building, which are designed to build the foundations needed to improve the lives of poor Dominicans and help them withstand future hardships in close collaboration with the Catholic Church and a number of Dominican nongovernmental organizations.

In recent years, as the population of Haitian migrants has continued to grow, CRS has used an integrated approach to dealing with this complex issue. It is often the migrant population and Dominicans of Haitian descent who lack access to basic education and health services and are the poorest and most vulnerable to human rights abuses.

**In 2005, the “Catholic-Hierarchy Statistics by Country” website** reported the following for the DR: two archdioceses, Santo Domingo and Santiago de los Caballeros; nine dioceses (Baní, Barahona, La Vega, Mao-Monte Cristo, Nuestra Señora de la Altagracia en Higüey, Puerto Plata, San Francisco de Macorís, San Juan de la Maguana, and San Pedro de Macorís) and one Military Ordinariate; 569 parishes with 424 diocesan priests and 454 religious priests, for a total of 878 (includes 20 bishops, 14 active and 6 emeritus). In addition, there were 363 permanent deacons, 605 male religious and 1,723 female religious.

The Archbishop of Santiago de los Caballeros and President of the Dominican Episcopal Conference (Conferencia Episcopal Dominicana, CED), in July 2005, was Mons. Ramón Benito de la Rosa y Carpio. At the inauguration of the new CED headquarters, the Archbishop stated: “In 1962, the CED was composed of five bishops, while today there are 20 – 14 practicing and six retired.” The first General Assembly of the CED was held in 1966.

Every town and village in Dominican Republic has its own patron saint and has a celebration for their saint. These celebrations usually cover an entire weekend or more with a fiesta, parade and music, when the town’s inhabitants gather in the main plaza or a local park. Although there is religious theme to these events, usually there is much drinking, loud music and dancing that lasts into the early hours of the morning.

**The country's official patron saint and Queen Protector is *Nuestra Señora de La Altagracia*** (“Our Lady of Highest Grace”). The story of this saint dates back to when Spain first colonized the island of Hispanola. Two men, Alonso y Antonio de Trejo, brought a painting of the Virgin to Hispanola from their home in Placencia, in the region of Extremadura in 1502. The legend states that the painting of the Virgin mysteriously disappeared from the house of the Trejo brothers and later reappeared in an orange tree. The location of this tree is where the first church of Higüey was built. Today, pilgrims make the trek there to deposit offerings and to ask favors of the Mother of Christ. Dominicans pray to her for miracles and cures and for intercession for whatever troubles them. This patron saint’s day is celebrated on 21 January. Every year more than

800,000 people make the pilgrimage to the **Basílica de Nuestra Señora de La Altagracia** in Higüey, capital city of the eastern province of La Altagracia.

*Nuestra Señora de La Altagracia* was crowned the spiritual mother of Higüey by Pope Pius XI on 15 August 1922. The ceremony was held in Santo Domingo at the *Puerta del Conde*. It was declared that 21 January would be a national holiday by the President of the Dominican Republic, Dr. Joaquin Antonio Balaguer Ricardo. This celebration is now a blend (syncretism) of African religious practices and Catholicism. Dominicans recite prayers, play African-influenced music, sing and dance.

**The national celebration in honor of Nuestra Señora de las Mercedes** (Our Lady of Mercy) is celebrated on 24 September; this is an official Dominican holiday. The **Iglesia y Convento de Nuestra Señora de las Mercedes** (Church and Convent of Our Lady of Mercy) is one of the most famous historic places in Santo Domingo. Construction of the church began in 1549 and was finished in 1555. It was known as one of the most distinguished Catholic temples in the West Indies. It was sacked by the English privateer Sir Francis Drake (b.1542–d.1596) in 1586, along with most of Santo Domingo. The church was reconstructed afterward but it suffered later damage from hurricanes and earthquakes as well. One of the church's treasures is its elaborately carved mahogany altar and pulpit that contains the image of a demon serpent.

The church was originally built as a gothic-style temple, with a baroque altar and lateral ornamentations of silver; and it also included several smaller chapels. The church underwent several changes and remodeling: in 1635, two gothic arcs were added to enhance the dome ceiling; a bell tower was also added to the structure; and, in 1910, the rear part of the church was made into a convent. The building was damaged in several earthquakes so the walls were strengthened which, in turn, caused the building to lose much of its original gothic splendor.

### **The Protestant Movement**

In 1824, about 6,000 Afro-American immigrants (freed slaves) from the U.S. arrived on the island of Hispanola at the invitation of Haitian President Jean-Pierre Boyer (ruled from March 1818 to March 1843). Among them were many Protestants, including two ordained ministers of the **African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC)**. The first English-speaking Protestant services were celebrated in Port-au-Prince in Haiti by the Rev. Scipio Beans, and in Samaná in present-day Dominican Republic by the Rev. Isaac Miller, who is considered the first resident Protestant minister in the DR.

With the arrival of some of the Afro-American immigrants in Santo Domingo in 1824, the government provided two Spanish colonial buildings for their communal use, one of which was used to celebrate religious services in English: *la Iglesia de San Francisco*. This congregation continued to exist under lay leadership until the 1880s, when Mr. H.C.C. Astwood became its pastor; at the same time, Astwood served as the U.S. Consul in Santo Domingo. During the period 1824-1899, the **Society of African Methodists** established several daughter churches in the region, as well as several mutual aid societies and a Bible Society that functioned for more than 50 years. However, it was not until 1899 that the U.S.-based AMEC was formally established in the Republic at the request of Afro-American Methodists in Samaná who desired to preserve their cultural roots. The first two AME congregations formally established were in

Samaná and Santo Domingo in 1899, under the leadership of the Rev. Jacob Paul James, Jr., and Mr. H.C.C. Astwood, respectively. An official history of AME work in the DR recorded 13 organized congregations with a total of 534 members in 1963.

Protestants took the opportunity provided by the Haitian occupation of the Dominican Republic to enter the country. Afro-Americans from the USA were invited to populate the land, and once they arrived, they asked for religious leadership. Some of the new immigrants were Anglicans, Baptists, Moravians or Methodists upon their arrival in the DR. In 1834, English-speaking Negro Baptists from the Turk Islands arrived to begin work in Puerto Plata. Also, in 1834, the **Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society of England** sent the Rev. John Tindall (served from 1834-1839) to begin an English-speaking ministry in Puerto Plata, and a few years later an AMEC minister from the USA established permanent work there. In April of that same year, Scottish colporteur James Thomson (a Baptist) arrived in Santo Domingo and distributed a shipment of the Scriptures to local residents. In 1837, a second English-speaking Methodist congregation was organized in Samará under the supervision of the Rev. William Cardy, an ordained AMEC minister. In 1848, after the Rev. William Tawler arrived in Puerto Plata to serve the Methodist brethren, Tawler became the first Protestant minister to preach and conduct worship services in Spanish. Later, the Rev. McNeil arrived from British Honduras (modern day Belize) to serve the Methodist community in the northern and eastern regions until 1931. Although, the **Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society of England** officially withdrew from the DR in 1934 and turned over its work to the **Dominican Evangelical Church**, one of the Wesleyan Methodist missionaries – the Rev. William Emerson Mears – served as a pastor in the DR for 53 continuous years, from 1892 to 1945.

**In 1843, the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS)** of England began work in Puerto Plata among Afro-Americans under the supervision of missionary William Littlewood from the Bahamas; this mission was reorganized by BMS missionary W. K. Rycroft in 1852, but it failed to survive more than a few years.

In 1873, the **Moravian Church** began work among English-speaking West Indian immigrants from the island of St. Thomas who had relocated in San Pedro de Macorís to work on the emerging sugarcane plantations. Many of these immigrants had been members of the Moravian Church in their homeland, the Dutch-controlled Virgin Islands. However, the early Moravian missionary efforts from St. Thomas were sporadic and temporary, and it was not until 1905-1907 that the first permanent Moravian church was built in San Pedro de Macorís, under the leadership of pastor J.A.D. Bloise. From the beginning until the 1960s, the Moravian work in the DR was limited to the English-speaking West Indian immigrant population. The Rev. Albert Franklin Penn, a native of St. Thomas, served as supervisor of the Moravian Mission for several decades. One of the major problems in the advancement of Moravian work was a lack of trained pastors. During the era of the Trujillo dictatorship (1931-1961), the West Indian population experienced difficulties due to travel restrictions to and from the DR. During the 1960s, as a result of the Civil War and the military occupation by U.S. Marines, many English-speaking West Indian immigrants suffered persecution by Spanish-speaking Dominicans due to racial and cultural prejudice. Consequently, many West Indians returned to their places of origin, which drastically reduced the number of Moravian parishioners in the DR. As a result of this situation, the Moravian Church merged with the **Dominican Evangelical Church**, while reserving the right to

worship in English and maintain separate congregations. At the time of the merger, there were only two Moravian churches with a total of 120 communicant members in the DR.

**The Anglican Church (Church of England)** entered the country in 1896 and established a mission among the English-speaking British West Indian population in San Pedro de Macorís, where these immigrants worked on the sugarcane plantations. Bishop James Theodore Holly, the Anglican Bishop of the **Apostolic Orthodox Church of Haiti**, ordained the Rev. P. Benjamin Isaac Wilson to serve these West Indian immigrants. The Rev. Wilson was ordained on 8 August 1897 and with his ordination the Anglican Church in the Dominican Republic was born. Bishop Holly is a historically important figure in the Episcopal Church, because he was its first African-American bishop. Wilson founded Holy Trinity Church in San Pedro de Macorís and many other missions. In 1913, the Dominican Anglican Church became a part of the U.S.-based Protestant Episcopal Church, along with the Anglican Church in Haiti; however, the Dominican Church remained under the supervision of the Episcopal Diocese of Puerto Rico. During its early years, the Anglican Church actively established itself in this country primarily with the help of missionary priests. American missionaries William Wiley and James Beer served in the DR beginning in 1918. Fr. Wiley founded the Church of the Epiphany in Santo Domingo and several other churches. Fr. Beer established San Esteban in San Pedro de Macorís and many other missions in rural areas where sugarcane production predominated. Wiley and Beer established a firm foundation for the Anglican-Episcopal Church in the DR. However, the Rev. Thomas Basden holds a special place of honor in the hearts of Dominican Episcopalians. Fr. Basden was born in the British West Indies, but was a life-long resident of the DR. For 50 years he faithfully served as the spiritual leader and evangelist for the growing Dominican Episcopal Church. He founded churches, wrote music, and encouraged the brethren to become committed followers of Christ.

During its first 60 years, most Anglican services were conducted in English. In the early 1950's, U.S. missionaries "nationalized" the Episcopal Church by instituting services in Spanish. Today, most Episcopal services are in Spanish with the exception of occasional services in English. In 1961, the Dominican Republic was recognized as a mission diocese of the Episcopal Church, Province IX. The Rt. Rev. Paul Kellogg became the first resident bishop and sought to solidify the Church's expansion.

In 1972, the Rt. Rev. Telésforo A. Isaac was elected as the first Dominican-born bishop. Under his leadership the Episcopal Church truly became a church of and for the Dominican people. He retired as Diocesan Bishop in 1991. Since then he has served as interim Bishop of other dioceses. He remains active in the Dominican diocese and was director of the diocese's first vocational deacon program. The Rt. Rev. Julio César Holguín Khoury was elected Bishop of the **Episcopal Diocese of the Dominican Republic** in 1991. He was born in San Francisco de Macorís. He is also serving as interim Bishop of the Diocese of Cuba.

In 2000, the Dominican Episcopal Church reported an estimated 1,900 members nationally. However, in the last 10 years the diocese has nearly doubled the number of its congregations to a total of 61 churches and preaching points, with a total of about 4,000 adherents. The only factor limiting its growth has been a lack of clergy; many of its priests are responsible for two or more churches. All churches in the Diocese are actually missions, because they cannot financially support themselves. The diocese has its own seminary, which is located in Santo Domingo and

on the same property as Epiphany Episcopal Church. The majority of the priests in the diocese have been educated at this seminary.

Apart from one independent missionary, later identified with the **Free Methodist Church of North America**, no other Protestant denominations initiated work until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1889, an independent missionary (a self-supporting retired pharmacist from Ohio), Samuel E. Mills, began Spanish-speaking work in Monte Cristi (1889) and later in Santiago de los Caballeros (1891) in the northwestern region of the country. In 1907, the Free Methodist Church of North America arrived and incorporated the earlier work begun by Mills; however, Mills continued to serve as a missionary, evangelist and pastor in the DR until his death in 1931. In 1908, the Secretary of Missions of the Free Methodist Church sent five new missionaries to the DR to advance the work. Later, Samuel's son George Mills served as director of the Free Methodist Mission in the DR. The first permanent church building constructed by the Mission was built in San Francisco de Macorís, in the southeastern region, in 1912. The Mission established a Bible institute in 1922 for training Dominican Christian workers, followed by a ministry of printing Evangelical literature on its own printing press. In 1927, the Mission began the publication of *Ecos Evangélicos*, the official journal of the Dominican Free Methodist Mission.

The first Annual Conference of the Dominican Free Methodist Church was held in 1930, when two Dominicans were ordained as pastors. By 1950, all of the established churches had national pastors, and in 1960 the national church body became an autonomous organization in fellowship with the Free Methodist Church of North America. It was not until 1956 that the first Free Methodist church was established in Santo Domingo, where many of its members had migrated to improve their socioeconomic situation. Between 1935 and 1955, the number of baptized members had grown slowly from about 800 to 1,800. However, by 1974, there were an estimated 6,300 communicate members, attending 37 churches and missions nationally, who were led by 23 ordained Dominican pastors. Most of this new church growth had occurred between 1965 and 1974, from 2,500 to 6,300 members.

**The Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA)** entered the country in 1907 and has built a strong national movement. The first SDA worker in the DR was a Jamaican colporteur, Charles Moulton, who arrived from Puerto Rico in 1907. He was the first of many such SDA workers who come from Puerto Rico during the following decades. Moulton established the first Sabbath School in San Pedro de Macorís, where he won his first converts to the controversial SDA movement, which at the time was considered somewhat heretical by other Protestant denominations due to its practice of worshipping on Saturday (the Jewish Sabbath). In 1909, Moulton organized another Sabbath School in Santo Domingo.

The first Seventh-day Adventist church was organized by H.D. Casebeer in Santo Domingo in 1917 during the first occupation by U.S. Marines (1916-1930). The second SDA church was organized by Moulton in 1921 in Jábaba, located in the fertile eastern Cibao Valley between Santiago de los Caballeros and San Francisco de Macorís. This prosperous and densely populated region became a fruitful place for the early development of SDA work in the DR.

Another area of the country where the SDA movement prospered was in the southwestern region. In 1922, SDA workers established a primary school in Barahona, where an SDA church was organized in 1924. A number of other SDA churches were established in this region during the

next few decades, including San Juan de la Maguana in 1942. The Dominican SDA Mission was formally organized in 1924 with two churches and 147 members. In 1963, Dominican Mission became the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference in the Dominican Republic, which is part of the Antillean Union Conference that also includes Puerto Rico.

The Dominican Adventist University had its origin in the Dominican Adventist College (established in 1947), which remained open until 1992, in the Herrera quarter of Santo Domingo. In 2007, the university had 1,143 students and 105 teachers.

In 1962, the SDA sponsored a national evangelistic campaign with evangelist Arturo Schmidt, which resulted in 849 baptisms. Between 1961 and 1963, the denomination added more than 3,000 people to its membership. SDA officials reported that this growth was a direct result of the Schmidt campaign.

Statistically, the Dominican SDA movement increased from 10 churches with 743 members in 1936 to 3,800 members in 1960, and to 16,636 in 1974 (with 83 organized churches and 183 groups – missions or preaching points – nationally). The number of churches and members grew from 417 in 1998 (111,455 members) to 552 in 2002 (172,755 members), and to 614 in 2007 (242,084 members). The latest SDA annual report (2009) listed 650 local churches in the DR with a total of 272,720 members, which makes this the largest Protestant denomination in the nation.

**In 1911, North American Protestant denominations that had already established work in Puerto Rico moved some of their personnel to the Dominican Republic.** In 1919, the **Northern Presbyterians, the Methodist Episcopal Church (North), and the Evangelical United Brethren**, meeting in New York, cooperated in forming an **Alliance for Christian Service** in the Dominican Republic, with the aim of jointly establishing an indigenous church in Santo Domingo. The church grew quickly and soon spread over the whole country. This alliance matured into a united church body in January 1922, with 29 baptized adults, under the name **Dominican Evangelical Church** (*Iglesia Evangélica Dominicana, IED*), which became autonomous in 1953. The first superintendent was Dr. Nathan Huffman, affiliated with the Evangelical United Brethren, who served from 1921 to 1929. In 1924, the IED reported four congregations with about 500 communicant members. At the time of Huffman's retirement in 1929 there were an estimated 1,000 members. In 1932, the **Wesleyan Methodist Church** united with the IED, and in 1960 so did the **Moravian Church**.

The IED carries on a wide variety of social service programs and has an active publication board that distributes a significant amount of literature. In 1932, the IED and the Alliance for Social Service established the **International Hospital in Santo Domingo**, which remained in existence for 25 years and operated a nurses' training school. In 1937, the IED founded the Dominican Bookstore (*Librería Dominicana*) in Santo Domingo, under the direction of Julio Postigo. By 1955, the IED supervised seven primary schools with a total of about 700 students. In addition, the IED had begun numerous social programs, including literacy, maternity clinics, and community development.

During 1957 and 1958, the IED sponsored a series of evangelistic campaigns nationwide using preachers from the U.S. and Dominican interpreters. The campaigns were held in the IED congre-

gations and resulted in more than 1,200 professions of faith; however, only 219 new members were added during the two-year effort.

Whereas in 1942 the total IED membership was a little more than 1,000 believers, by 1955 it had grown to 2,089 baptized members in 30 organized churches with 27 national pastors; by 1974 there were 4,649 members in 38 churches with 37 Dominican pastors; and by 1997 there were 6,280 members among 72 congregations and 55 preaching points. In 2009, there were an estimated 10,000 members in 55 churches and more than 100 preaching points, in addition to 20 educational centers, a seminary, six health clinics, and a national campground. The IED is a member of the **World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC)**.

**In March 1917, the first Pentecostal evangelists** arrived and began work in San Pedro de Macorís. Salomón and Dionisia Feliciano were affiliated with the **Puerto Rican Assemblies of God (AG)**. Within a year they had organized a congregation of 40 believers in San Pedro de Macorís that later affiliated with the **Dominican Evangelical Church** (1920s). He became well-known for preaching in the streets and marketplaces. In September 1930, the **Assemblies of God of Puerto Rico** sent Francisco Hernández González and his wife Victoria to officially begin the **Dominican Assemblies of God**. They began work in Santo Domingo before relocating to San Pedro de Macorís, where a congregation of 70 believers was established by 1933.

The AG work grew from four organized churches with a total of 316 members in 1940 to 11 churches with 500 members in 1944. In 1944, the Assemblies of God Bible Institute was launched in Santiago de los Caballeros under the leadership of missionaries Mock, Warner and Pugh. By 1952, the AG work had grown to 30 churches with 89 preaching points, served by 53 pastors and lay workers, with a total of 1,172 members. In 1959, there were 55 organized churches with an estimated 3,200 members.

The initial efforts by Puerto Rican missionaries were taken over by the U.S.-based Assemblies of God in 1941, with the arrival of missionaries Lawrence and Jessie Perrault. Since 1965, the work has been under the control of Dominican leaders, although the director of the Bible Institute was a foreign missionary until the appointment of Jimiro Feliciano in 1977.

By 1994, the Dominican Assemblies of God reported 1,109 churches and missions with an estimated 50,000 adherents, who were served by 1,009 pastors. In 1998, the Division of Foreign Mission reported 63,029 adherents, which ranked this denomination as the second-largest in the DR. Nationally, 13 AG Bible institutes had been established for training national Christian leaders: pastors, teachers, evangelists and lay workers. In 2009, the total baptized membership was reported as 60,331 with 15,549 catechumens, and a total community (adherents) of about 150,000 in 527 organized churches, 485 missions (*filiales*) and 845 preaching points (*campos blancos*) served by 888 ordained and licensed pastors. The denomination's official name is: *Concilio Evangélico de las Asambleas de Dios de la República Dominicana*.

*Prior to 1960, the following groups also had begun work in the Dominican Republic.*

**Plymouth Brethren Assemblies.** Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Peterkin, Plymouth Brethren missionaries who had previously served in Argentina, arrived in La Vega in 1920, after being encouraged to

do so by an Argentine Plymouth Brethren layman, Harry Lewis V. Smith, who had gone to the DR to work as an accountant for the railroad under construction in the northern part of the country, between Sánchez and La Vega, and had realized the great spiritual need of the Dominicans. A year later, Mr. and Mrs. Duncan Reid arrived from Canada to assist the Peterkins in the northwestern region. After spending some time in the towns of La Vega and Sánchez, the Reids relocated to Puerto Plata on the north coast in 1924, where they began a ministry that lasted more than 50 years. Additional Plymouth Brethren missionaries arrived, mainly from Canada, and concentrated their ministries on the north coast and in the Cibao Valley. The first Brethren Assembly was established in La Vega in 1929. During the 1930s, missionaries Ralph and Mariana Carter arrived, followed by Donald and Gwendolyn McIntosh. Previously, in 1923, Asa and Phoebe Moore had come from New York to pioneer the work in Puerto Plata. They had served previously in Guyana (1918-1921), and they later served in Pakistan (1959-1961). In 1941, the Carters relocated in Santiago de los Caballeros, where they established an assembly in a sector of northern Santiago known as Savica.

The Plymouth Brethren became well known for their work with children, in the production of Evangelical musical and radio programs, and in literature ministries. In 1938, they produced the first evangelistic radio program in Spanish for Latin America from Puerto Plata. In 1941, Ian McWilliam Rathie and his wife became the first Plymouth Brethren missionaries to work in Santo Domingo, where he also began a publishing ministry, called *La Prensa Bíblica*, for the production and distribution of Evangelical literature. A Brethren ministry magazine has been published bi-monthly since January-February 1997 by *Temas Bíblicas* in Santo Domingo, under the editorial guidance of Gines and Manuel Adames.

The Rathies pioneered the work in Santo Domingo and established the first Brethren Assembly in the nation's capital, beginning in 1941. It was not until 1951 that the work began to expand throughout the city, after an evangelistic campaign was held in a circus tent in the Villa Juana sector. Today, there are 45 Brethren Assemblies in the Greater Santo Domingo Metro Area.

The Brethren Assemblies, known in the DR as "Templos Bíblicos," are not a denomination with a formal organizational structure, rather are a fellowship of autonomous groups of believers led by laymen. Each local assembly is administered by a council of elders, who are assisted by independent Brethren missionaries who are supported by local assemblies in their homeland. The Plymouth Brethren have no formal leadership training program rather their leaders are prepared through serious Bible study in the local assemblies under the supervision of the elders and the missionaries.

The so-called Plymouth Brethren movement began around 1827 led by four individuals in Dublin, Ireland, who assembled by themselves since they had difficulties with the "professed" churches of the day. Rather than accepting the standard doctrines of the Christian churches around them, they began to study the Scriptures together in private homes and encouraged this Bible study method among other individuals. Many "gatherings" grew up throughout the United Kingdom, but the most well-known group was founded in Plymouth, England, in 1831 from which the name "Plymouth Brethren" is derived. The Brethren are known for their "simplicity in meeting," a nondenominational approach to their church life ("the New Testament pattern for the church"), a strong emphasis on the private study of the Scriptures, and are best known for their Dispensational/Premillennial belief system that originated with John Nelson Darby (b.1800-

d.1882) and that has been incorporated today in much of conservative Evangelical teaching worldwide. There are two main branches of the Plymouth Brethren (Christian Brethren/Brethren Assembly) movement: "Open Brethren" and "Exclusive Brethren." Open Brethren assemblies vary from tight gatherings that only extend fellowship to those who have first left the established denominations, to very loose gatherings that receive any visiting believer into their fellowship. The Exclusive Brethren hold an uncompromising "separatist" doctrine that does not allow visitors to participate in their group until they have been thoroughly scrutinized by the elders. Also, those who leave the group fellowship are shunned by members of the group because "leavers" are seen as having chosen the world and the devil against God, and because they could bring members into contact with the sinful world.

In 1951, after 30 years of ministry in the DR, the Brethren Assemblies held their first Annual Bible Convention of Elders, which during its first decade was led by Brethren missionaries and later by Dominican elders. This annual activity has served to promote greater unity among the various Brethren Assemblies, and to maintain biblical and practical standards among their members. Attending the 2009 Annual Convention were 171 elders from 86 local assemblies, of which 40 were located in Santo Domingo, followed by Puerto Plata (9), Nagua (8), Barahona (7), Santiago (6), Río San Juan (5), Gasper Hernández (4), Cabera (3), and one each in Cabre, La Vega, Moca and Samaná. The official "Templos Bíblicos" website currently reports 45 assemblies in Santo Domingo.

The autonomous Brethren Assemblies do not keep membership statistics, which makes it difficult to evaluate their historical development in the DR. However, in 1974, missiologist Daryl Platt (Evangelical Mennonite Church) reported that the estimated attendance in all the Brethren Assembly Sunday schools in the Santo Domingo was about 2,000 (Platt 1981:61). In March 2010, an international Brethren Assemblies website ([www.echoes.org.uk](http://www.echoes.org.uk)) reported 300 local assemblies in the DR. Another Brethren Assemblies website ("www.BrethrenOnLine.org") reported that the DR had 30 Exclusive Brethren assemblies. In there are a total of 300 Brethren Assemblies in the DR then the total national membership is probably between 15,000 and 20,000.

**In 1922, French-speaking Haitian Baptists** began work among Haitian immigrants at La Romana in the southeastern region. This work continued as the autonomous **Haitian Baptist Association**. During 2000-2003, this association was reorganized as *Iglesias Bautistas de República Dominicana* (IBAREDO) with the support of Baptist associations in Puerto Rico and the U.S.: *Iglesias Bautistas de Puerto Rico* (IBPR) and American Baptist Churches in the USA. In April 2010, their official website reported 10 churches and four missions nationally, most of which were located in the south-central and eastern regions.

**The Church of God, Inc.**, was officially founded in Puerto Rico in 1939, but its ministry in the Dominican Republic began in 1930 with the arrival from Puerto Rico of the Rev. Francisco Hernández in the vicinity of Santo Domingo. During 1939-1940, two additional evangelists came from Puerto Rico and began to minister in Santiago de los Caballeros, where their first members were from other Evangelical churches in the area. The Rev. N.W. Archer arrived in 1944 and became the first superintendent of the Church of God, Inc., in the DR. Under his leadership, additional churches were established in Barahona, Jarabacoa, and San Francisco de Macorís. When the Rev. Ramón Fontain arrived from Puerto Rico in 1946 as the new superintendent, there were 10 organized churches in various parts of the country. In 1974, the work had

grown to include 20 organized churches with a total of 6,100 members who were led by 27 national pastors. Currently, there are 29 churches with an estimated 8,845 members nationally, according to the denomination's official website.

The **Church of God of Prophecy** first entered the country in 1933, when a Haitian immigrant began a preaching ministry in San Pedro de Macorís. In 1974, this denomination reported 60 churches with about 3,000 members nationally.

**The Assembly of Christian Churches** was founded in 1934 in the Dominican Republic following a series of evangelistic campaigns led by Francisco Olazábal and fellow evangelists in the Caribbean during the 1930s. Puerto Rican evangelist Jesús Vidal, whose ministry was linked to Bethel Temple in New York City (founded in 1932 by Olazábal), conducted an evangelistic crusade in the Dominican Republic in 1934. Internationally, this Pentecostal Holiness body was founded in 1932 under the leadership of Olazábal in Houston, Texas, with the support of Mexican-American pastors in the Southwest and Puerto Ricans in the Northeast, as well as in Puerto Rico. Later, after the tragic death of Olazábal in 1937, the Puerto Rican leaders in the USA and Puerto Rico decided to form a separate organization in New York City in 1939 under the name *Concilio Asamblea de Iglesias Cristianas*. By 1974, there were 72 organized churches in the DR with 3,270 members, located mainly in the area of Santo Domingo, San Cristóbal, Baní and Barahona.

**In 1939, the West Indies Mission (now World Team**, founded in Cuba in 1935), a nondenominational faith mission, began its work in the DR at La Vega by building on the pioneer ministry of a Cuban evangelical who was educated in Jamaica, Cecil Samuels. One of World Team's first projects was to establish a Bible training center (1943) for the preparation of preachers, pastors and evangelists for the new movement. When the national church body was organized, it chose the name *Templos Evangélicos*. After the arrival of four Cuban missionaries in 1948, the work of the Mission began to expand other areas: first to Azua and then to Santo Domingo (1955). By 1974, twenty-one churches had been organized nationally with about 800 baptized members. In 1979, the World Team reported nine career missionaries working among 34 established churches in the DR.

**The Church of God World Missions (CGCT)** also traces its origin in the country to 1939 with the arrival of George L. Silvestre, a Bahamian layperson, who was appointed a missionary to the DR by the headquarters in Cleveland, TN. He began his work in Santo Domingo and was successful in organizing four churches. In 1942, Pedro Cabrera founded a church in Santo Domingo and became the denomination's leading pastor. Later, Francisco de Castro y Hernández, an evangelist and pastor, brought his independent church into the CGCT. By 1959, the CGCT reported 700 members and 3,000 adherents in 13 established churches and seven missions. Until 1978 (except for a period during the 1960s) the General Overseer had always been a U.S. missionary. However, since then, Dominican leaders have been in charge of the work, which has grown rapidly. By 1974, the CGCT had grown to about 1,300 members nationally. In 1980, it reported 6,003 members in 140 congregations, and by 1996 it had grown to 22,077 members. Today, this denomination is present throughout the country, with more than 640 local churches, 800 pastors, and an estimated 80,000 members. Its headquarters are in Santo Domingo.

**The Evangelical Mennonite Church** began its ministry in the DR in 1945 with the arrival of Miss Lucille Rupp in 1945; she settled in the community of Dajabón, the capital city of Dajabón province, located on the border with Haiti, in the northwestern region. The city is located on the Dajabón River, also known as the “Massacre River” because of its connection to the so-called Parsley Massacre of an estimated 20,000-30,000 Haitians by Dominican military forces under the command of Gen. Trujillo in 1937. In 1945, Mr. and Mrs. Omar Sutton arrived from Africa and began a ministry along the Haitian border in the southwestern region at El Cercado. Sutton and his Dominican assistants established a network of preaching stations in that border region. The first Mennonite church was organized in 1948 with 13 believers in El Cercado. Two additional Mennonite missionary families arrived later, which allowed for greater evangelistic activities and the establishment of additional churches. The first Annual Conference was celebrated in 1951 with representatives from the four organized churches and missions then in existence. In 1952, the headquarters of the Mennonite Mission were transferred to San Juan de la Maguana, located in the province of San Juan in the southwestern region. By 1955, six churches had been organized with a total of 101 members. After 1962, new churches were organized in Santo Domingo, Barahona, and elsewhere. However, in 1966, there were only 13 organized churches with a total of 375 members and by 1974, 15 churches with 766 members.

**In 1945, the Missionary Church (World Partners)** sent a team of missionaries to the DR to begin ministry in the community of Dajabón, about the same time that the Evangelical Mennonite Church initiated its work there. This team included the following families: J.C. Neuen-schwander, Daniel Dick, Roberto Elliot and David Clark. Beginning in the 1960s, the mission work expanded beyond its base of operations in Dajabón to Santo Domingo (David Dick), Santiago de los Caballeros (1966), and San José de las Matas (1972). The national church body was incorporated in 1965 under the name, *Iglesia Evangélica Misionera, Inc.* However, by 1974, this denomination could only report 423 baptized members nationally in a handful of churches and missions.

**The Arc of Salvation Evangelical Pentecostal Church** (*Concilio Evangélico Pentecostal Arca de Salvación, CEPAS*) was founded among native Dominicans in Santo Domingo in 1945 by Dominican pastor Bienvenido Eugenio Santos Rodríguez and his wife, Bárbara Díaz. Later, this new denomination began to send workers to Puerto Rico and New York City to organize new churches among Dominican immigrants. By 1974, there were 12 organized churches with about 600 members nationally in the Dr. In December 2008, it reported 82 local churches nationally. In April 2010, the total membership was about 7,000 (9,350 adherents). Its current president is the Rev. Luis Marino González.

**UFM International (Christian Bible Church)**, a nondenominational faith mission, began work in San Pedro de Macorís in 1949, with the arrival of missionaries Jack and Bessie Cook. From there the work expanded to Santo Domingo, Barahona and the Cibao Valley. The national church body was organized in 1964 under the name *Iglesia Bíblica Cristiana*. By 1974, there were 11 organized churches and 650 baptized members who were served by an unknown number of national pastors and 16 foreign missionaries.

**The Church of the Apostolic Faith** was founded in the DR in 1950. By 1974, it had organized eight churches with about 420 members. Today, the only listing in the DR for this denomination is Pastor Albert Smith in La Romana. This church is affiliated with the **Apostolic Faith**

**Church World Headquarters** in Portland, Oregon, which reported 92 affiliated churches worldwide. This denomination was founded in 1908 as **The Apostolic Faith Mission** by Florence L. Crawford, a Methodist laywoman who attended the **Azusa Street Apostolic Mission** in Los Angeles in 1906, where she allegedly “received the experience of sanctification and the power of the Holy Spirit.” Portland was established as the headquarters of the growing movement. In 1922, the headquarters building, a landmark in downtown Portland, was erected with a large neon sign with the message "Jesus the Light of the World," which was first displayed in 1917 and was transferred to the new structure.

**Baptist Mid-Missions** (Cleveland, Ohio) began its ministry in the DR in 1950 with missionaries from very conservative Baptist churches in the USA, who refused to work with other evangelical churches, pastors or missionaries. By 1988, this organization had organized several congregations with a total of about 400 baptized members. By 1998, it reported seven churches with about 500 members. It does not cooperate with the Dominican Baptist Convention.

**The Defenders of the Christian Faith** (*Defensores de la Fe Cristiana*) was founded in Arecibo, Puerto Rico, in 1931 by the Rev. Juan Francisco Rodríguez and the controversial Gerald B. Winrod. In 1925, an interdenominational group of pastors and laymen in the USA headed by Winrod, an independent Fundamentalist Baptist preacher, established an organization (now headquartered in Kansas City, MO) to begin publishing a magazine, *The Defender*, and numerous pamphlets and tracts. In addition, the **Defenders of the Faith** organization founded a number of congregations, primarily in the New York City and Chicago metropolitan areas. In 1968, there were 14 churches and approximately 2,000 members in the USA.

In 1932, the organization’s missionary in Puerto Rico, Juan Francisco Rodríguez, accompanied the Rev. Francisco Olazábal (an independent Mexican-born Pentecostal evangelist) in a series of evangelistic campaigns in Puerto Rico, which produced many converts for the Defenders of the Faith and gave the new denomination a Pentecostal flavor. The movement in PR has been independent of its U.S.-based parent organization since 1965. During the 1930s, many Puerto Ricans migrated to the USA, including members of Defenders of the Faith. In 1944, the denomination’s first Spanish-speaking church was established in New York City; today (2010) there are 50 organized churches from coast-to-coast. A theological seminary was established in Río Piedras, PR, in 1945, which has trained many of the denomination’s pastors. Its ministry in the DR began in 1951 as a missionary outreach from Puerto Rico. By 1968, there were 68 affiliated churches and about 6,000 members in Puerto Rico. By 1974, there were 14 organized churches in urban populations in and around the cities of Santo Domingo and Puerto Plata, with a total of about 3,000 members.

### *Evangelistic Campaigns and Spiritual Renewal*

**The Evangelism and Divine Healing Campaign** led by evangelists David García and Jaime Cardona in 1954 in Santo Domingo became the first spiritual revival of importance in the history of the nation, and produced substantial growth among Pentecostal churches. One of the Assembly of God churches in Santo Domingo reported that, after the campaign, it had baptized more than 200 new converts. Also, 15 new Pentecostal churches were founded in the southern region following the campaign. The membership of the Assemblies of God grew from 600 members to more than 1,200 nationally between 1953 and 1954.

A series of **Evangelism-in-Depth (EID) crusades**, held between 1959 and 1971, under the sponsorship of the Latin America Mission of Costa Rica impacted at least eleven Latin American countries on a nationwide scale and influenced evangelistic movements around the globe. During 1965, in the midst of the Dominican civil war, an **EID** campaign was held nationwide coordinated by an interdenominational steering committee. EID emphasized the mobilization of all believers in witness and focused on the centrality and unity of the church and on the values of a structured year-long program of training and mobilization, citywide campaigns in major cities, and a final grand campaign in the capital city in a large stadium.

According to observers, the EID campaign had an important spiritual impact on the nation: 2,200 local prayer groups were organized; 8,000 laymen were trained in personal evangelism and mobilized for house-to-house visitation; and more than 13,800 professions of faith were reported by the end of the campaign. The Rev. Allen Thompson, field director of the West Indies Mission, stated in *Whitened Harvest* magazine (July-August 1966:8):

In 1939, the West Indies Mission began work in the Dominican Republic, a country which soon proved to be almost impenetrable to the Gospel. The 27 years of difficult sowing in tears yielded 15 congregations and around 900 believers in Christ. In the year of evangelism just past [1965], the reaping in joy has added to the WIM effort 2 churches, 8 additional preaching points, and approximately 700 new believers.

By 1974, observers reported that numerous prayer groups had been formed jointly by Catholics and Evangelicals in Santo Domingo during the early years of the **Charismatic Renewal Movement (CRM)**, with the participation of some Catholic priests and nuns. Later, Catholic authorities restricted Catholic parishioners from participating in ecumenical prayer groups and other such activities without the presence of a Catholic priest to provide proper spiritual guidance. Soon, Catholic and Evangelical Charismatics went their separate ways, although many Catholics who had experienced the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit in their lives decided to continue meeting in the homes of Evangelicals and eventually became active in Pentecostal-Charismatic churches.

*After 1960, many new groups arrived in the country.*

**The independent Christian churches and churches of Christ (instrumental)**, affiliated with the **North American Christian Convention** in Indianapolis, IN, began work in the DR during the 1960s. In 1988 they established the La Hispaniola Bible Institute. The 2008 *Directorio del Ministerio de las Iglesias Cristianas e Iglesias de Cristo de Habla Hispana* lists 71 churches in the DR. Another reliable source states that there are currently 110 **churches of Christ (non-instrumental = a capella)** in the DR. There are probably between 9,000-10,000 adherents in all of these churches.

**Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board (SBFMB**, now International Mission Board), missionary Howard Shoemake, who was transferred with his wife from Ecuador, established the Central Baptist Temple in Santo Domingo in 1964. By 1977, there were eight churches with a total of about 700 church members. Shoemake established a working relationship with MAP, an international medical mission that provides personnel and supplies to evangelical mission

agencies worldwide. Consequently, the Central Baptist Temple became the center of the medical work in the DR and a storehouse for MAP's medical supplies. During the 1965 Civil War, the advancement of the fledgling Baptist work was hampered by the invasion of U.S. Marines who established martial law and restricted travel in the countryside, as well as between different sectors of Santo Domingo.

The Rev. and Mrs. Paul Siebenmann arrived in the DR in 1974 and established a new work in Puerto Plata, which later became the largest and most active Baptist church in the Republic due to the variety and success of Siebenmann's ministries, which include sports activities, social work, educational programs in public schools, radio programs, and evangelistic visitation of homes in Puerto Plata and other northern cities. A decentralized Baptist theological training institute was established in 1972 in Santo Domingo, Bonao and San Pedro de Macoris. Later, this institution became a theological seminary with Siebenmann as its rector. After Hurricane "David" caused severe damage in the DR in 1979, the Southern Baptist Mission provided emergency medical and social assistance to people in need through its local churches.

**The Dominican Baptist Convention (DBC)** was formally organized in 1968, when the SBFMB reorganized its work in the DR under national leadership. The SBFMB supported the DBC fraternally in five areas of ministry: evangelization, Christian education, mass media, social ministries and long-range planning. In 1988, the DBC reported 14 organized churches with a total of about 1,000 members; in 1998, there were 22 affiliated churches with about 1,300 members. The *Seminario Teológico Bautista Dominicano (STBD)* was founded in Santo Domingo in 1980 and now has several extension programs: Santiago de los Caballeros, Puerto Plata and Bonao.

**The Pentecostal Church of God, International Mission** began in Puerto Rico in 1916, and was officially constituted in 1921. Between 1921 and 1956, the denomination was affiliated with the General Council of the Assemblies of God in the USA. After it became an independent body in 1956, it established mission work in many countries of the Americas, including the Dominican Republic (ca. 1945). In 1974, it reported about 1,200 church members in the DR.

**The Latin American Council of the Pentecostal Church of God of New York – *El Concilio Latinoamericano de la Iglesia de Dios Pentecostal de Nuevo York, Inc.* (CLANY)** – was founded in New York City in 1954 by Puerto Rican leaders who were affiliated previously with the Pentecostal Church of God in Puerto Rico. CLANY is its sister denomination in the USA. Mission work began in the Dominican Republic after 1965 under the leadership of the Rev. Sergio O. Santana.

There are CLANY-affiliated churches in Santo Domingo, La Romana and San Pedro de Macoris in the south; and in Santiago de los Caballeros, Bonao and La Vega in the north. CLANY reported 44 organized churches and 16 preaching points in 2009. In addition, there is a national extension program of the *Instituto Bíblico Latino Americano de Nueva York*, which offers its same educational program in the DR.

**The United Pentecostal Church International (UPCI – a “Jesus Only” group)** was founded in the DR in 1965 by missionaries Harold Glen Smith and his wife as an outreach of their ministry in Puerto Rico. In 1978, the Burns family became the first resident missionaries in the

DR, after having serviced in Venezuela. Burns became the first National Superintendent and is responsible for the construction of most of this denomination's church buildings in the Republic. Later, Burns relocated to St. Louis, MO, to work in the UPCI's publishing house. In 1985, missionaries Gabriel Cruz and his wife Sara arrived in the DR and worked with Burns. Later, they relocated to Puerto Plata, where they founded a church and a Bible institute, as well as other local churches in the surrounding area.

In 1987, the Rev. and Mrs. Vannoy arrived from New York City and accepted the responsibility of serving as the National Superintendents. They assisted in remodeling several church buildings, including the National Office. In 1991, the Rev. and Mrs. Shirley arrived to help in the advancement of the work throughout the nation. Since 1965, many Dominican pastors have been trained to provide leadership for the local churches and other ministries, including a Bible institute. By 2009, 40 local churches had been established nationally, with about 4,000 adherents.

In addition, the *Iglesia Pentecostal Unida Latinoamericana de Colombia* (IPUL) sent its own workers to the DR to assist the UPCI missionaries (from the USA) and Dominican pastors in the task of evangelization and church planting. This UPCI sister denomination reported that its missionaries had organized four local churches in the DR.

**The Christian & Missionary Alliance (C&MA)** began its current work in the DR in 1968. By 1974, this Holiness denomination had planted 16 churches with about 450 members. However, the C&MA first entered the Dominican Republic during the latter part of the 19th century. In 1891, worship services and a Sunday school began in the province of Monte Cristi, and over the next 20 years Alliance ministries extended to Santiago de los Caballeros, Santo Domingo, San Pedro de Macorís, and the southwestern area of the island. In 1915, C&MA founder Dr. Albert B. Simpson reported to the General Council, "I regret to inform you we've had to close our work in Dominican Republic because the missionaries we had there died."

Fifty years later, in 1965, a Dominican living in New York City felt a call to reopen the C&MA work in his native land; he was sent as an official missionary in February 1968. After his arrival, small groups of Haitian immigrant believers in San Pedro de Macorís joined the C&MA, as did another group of believers in Santo Domingo. The leaders of the Santo Domingo group began to evangelize their community. This small but determined group launched the CMA ministry from a member's home located on the eastern side of Santo Domingo. In May 1970, the Dominican government officially recognized the C&MA and granted it corporate status. Due to the evangelistic efforts of these early leaders, there are now many established and growing churches throughout numerous regions in the Dominican Republic. In 2009, the C&MA reported 37 organized churches (25 members or more), 35 missions (under 25 members), 11 preaching points (small groups), 19 ordained ministries, 14 lay pastors, 28 licensed workers, and four local Dominican missionary church planters.

**The Church of God in Christ – *Iglesia de Dios en Cristo*** (headquarters in Memphis, TN) was founded in the Dominican Republic in 1975 by Elder Francisco Osvaldo Pimentel Parra, who established the mother church of the movement in San Pedro de Macorís. This Central Church has trained and sent out many pastors, evangelists, teachers and lay workers, who have founded four daughter churches; these have now established their own missions and preaching points.

The *Concilio de Iglesias de Dios en Cristo en la República Dominicana* was officially incorporated in 1979 by Superintendent Francisco Osvaldo Pimentel Parra, who served in that capacity for more than 25 years and as a pastor for 27 years of which 24 years were at the Central Church in San Pedro de Macorís. In 1999, Superintendent Pimentel Parra resigned and his son Isaac was appointed the new national leader.

Although the **Church of the Nazarene** (Kansas City, MO) did not officially move into the DR until 1975, during the previous 20 years “The Nazarene Hour” (*La Hora Nazarena*) radio broadcast was heard in the country. Also, the Nazarene Publishing House (Latin Division) began making Holiness materials available to other Evangelicals in the DR. In 1972, the World Mission Department voted to officially begin work in the DR. However, it was not until August 1975 that their first missionaries, the Rev. Louie Bustle and his wife, arrived in the DR. Later, the Rev. Jerry D. Porter and his wife Toni were assigned as missionaries to the DR to assist in the development of the work by planning new churches and establishing a program of theological education by extension. At the first General Assembly in 1976, there were 12 organized churches with a total of 228 members. Surprisingly, the Church of the Nazarene established 60 churches in six years; in 1981 over 2,000 members were reported. Ministerial and theological training by extension were provided in conjunction with the Nazarene Bible College in Costa Rica.

By 1985, the five Nazarene districts in the DR reported 150 organized churches, and by 1990 the denomination reported 10,253 baptized members nationally. However, the growth of the denomination was seriously impacted after 1990 when the Dominican government repatriated thousands of illegal Haitian immigrants, which included hundreds of Nazarenes. By 2004, only 7,964 members were reported nationally in the DR.

Missionaries of the **Christian Reformed Church** (Grand Rapids, MI) visited the Dominican Republic from Puerto Rico during the 1970s to follow up on contacts from the denomination’s radio programs. It was not until 1981 that the first resident missionaries arrived to begin work among the Haitian immigrants on the sugarcane plantations and in marginal areas of urban centers. The first to arrive were Ray and Gladys Brinks and Neal and Sandy Hegeman. The first church members were Creole-speaking people of Haitian origin, which still make up about 90 percent of the denomination’s national membership. However, during the 1980s, several Spanish-speaking churches were established among native Dominicans; these churches were organized in 1990 into their own ecclesiastic district. In 1998, the denomination reported 6,280 adherents among 72 organized churches and 55 preaching points served by 29 ordained pastors, 17 elders and 12 deacons. The Christian Reformed Church is a member of the **World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), which was created in June 2010 through a merger of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC).**

**Three of the Dominican-born denominations are** (1) Converted to Christ Church (*Iglesia Convertidos a Cristo*), founded by José R. Mallén Malla in 1982 (a mother church with nine daughter missions); (2) the Council of Shekinah Christian Churches (*Concilio de Iglesias Cristianas Shekinah*), founded in 1988, now with 10 local churches; and (3) Church of God Tabernacle, Pathway to Heaven (*Tabernaculo Iglesia de Dios, Camino al Cielo*), founded by Rev. Louis (date unknown), now with 62 churches nationally.

Additional denominations that are known to exist in the DR are: Bethany Fellowship Missions (1968), Baptist International Missions (1969), Christian Reformed Church of North America (1981, work with Haitian immigrants), Mission to the Americas-Presbyterian Church in America (1981), Harvest (1982), Floresta USA (1985), World Servants (1986), International Children's Care (1987), Habitat for Humanity International (1987), South American Missionary Society (1987), World Indigenous Missions (1987), Medical Ambassadors International (1988), Mission Impossible (1988), Kids Alive International (1989), Young Life (1989), United Church Board of World Missions (1991), The Luke Society (1991), Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (1993), STEM Ministries (1994), Bible Baptist Fellowship (1996), Apostolic Assembly of Faith in Jesus Christ - *Asamblea Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús* (date unknown: a "Jesus Only" Pentecostal body founded among Mexican-Americans in the USA), and the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel (date unknown).

**ESTIMATED MEMBERSHIP FOR LARGEST  
PROTESTANT DENOMINATIONS IN  
THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, 1960-2010  
(Sorted by estimated membership in 2010)**

DENOMINATIONAL NAME (NOTES)	1960 MEMBERS (1)	1965 MEMBERS (2)	1974 MEMBERS (3)	1985 MEMBERS (4)	2000 MEMBERS (5)	2010 MEMBERS (6)
1 Seventh-Day Adventist Church (1907)	3,381	7,903	16,316	20,000	142,438	272,720
2 Church of God (Cleveland, TN) (1939)	2,700	3,000	6,910	10,500	16,400	80,000
3 Assemblies of God (1930)	2,211	3,352	7,180	10,900	30,300	60,331
4 Church of God of Prophecy (1933)	837	996	3,000	9,010	15,200	19,300
5 Free Methodist Church (1907)	1,871	3,000	6,319	5,190	10,700	12,800
6 Assembly of Christian Churches (1934)	450	700	3,130	5,300	8,900	11,300
7 Church of the Nazarene (1972)	--	--	200	4,200	18,400	10,000
8 Dominican Evangelical Church (1922)	1,476	3,000	4,649	4,900	6,130	10,000
9 Christian Brethren Assemblies (1920)	550	2,500	4,000	4,200	5,300	10,000
10 Christian Churches/Churches of Christ	500	1,500	3,000	5,000	8,000	10,000
11 Christian Reformed Church (1981)	--	--	95	2,392	7,750	9,140
12 Church of God, Inc. (1940)	1,100	1,200	1,730	2,500	3,080	8,845
13 Ark of Salvation (1947)	300	600	2,100	3,000	4,680	7,000
14 Defenders of the Faith (1951)	350	2,000	3,000	4,000	5,850	6,980
15 Pentecostal Church of God, M.I. (1945)	--	500	1,340	2,000	3,120	5,000
16 Evangelistic Tabernacle (MMM)	--	230	830	1,500	2,430	5,000
17 United Pentecostal Church (1965)	300	400	920	1,400	2,300	4,000
18 Dominican Episcopal Church (1918)	1,083	1,266	2,710	2,700	1,900	4,000
19 Church of God in Christ (1975)	--	--	--	1,920	3,120	3,910
20 Christian Bible Church-UFM (1949)	100	150	650	980	2,920	3,750
21 Pentecostal Church of God-CLANY	--	--	500	1,800	2,500	3,300
22 Christian & Missionary Alliance (1969)	--	--	--	450	3,590	2,550
23 Mennonite Evangelical Church (1946)	233	370	780	950	1,620	2,500
24 Dominican Baptist Convention	--	50	560	940	1,850	2,500
25 Evangelical Temples-WorldTeam (1939)	200	360	800	1,100	1,740	2,120
26 African Meth. Episcopal Church (1899)	492	1,200	2,366	1,180	1,580	1,810
Independent churches	2,500	5,000	10,000	12,500	15,000	20,000
All other denominations	1,500	3,500	7,000	9,000	11,000	13,000
<b>ESTIMATED TOTALS</b>	<b>21,334</b>	<b>40,717</b>	<b>84,717</b>	<b>118,592</b>	<b>176,090</b>	<b>601,856</b>

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Overall, Protestant adherents have shown significant growth nationally between 1992 and 2006. In May 1992, a public opinion poll conducted by Penn & Schoen Associates, revealed that 11 percent of the population were Protestants, compared to a 2006 poll by CID-Gallup that reported that 18.2 percent were Protestant. The table above shows the reported growth of the 26 largest known Protestant denominations during the period 1960 to 2010.

**The New Apostolic Church International** (*Iglesia Nueva Apostólica Internacional*), with headquarters in Zurich, Switzerland (founded in 1832 in England as the Apostolic-Catholic Community; reconstituted in 1863 in Hamburg, Germany), is a 19<sup>th</sup> century pre-Pentecostal denomination that emerged within a spiritual renewal movement in Europe that evidenced “signs and wonders” (speaking in tongues, prophecy and healing) under the leadership of apostles and prophets. Today, it has affiliated churches in Spain, Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Paraguay, Argentina, Bolivia, Venezuela and the Dominican Republic in the Spanish-speaking world, as well as in Portugal and Brazil.

**Assembly of the Pentecostal Churches of Jesus Christ, Inc.** - *Asamblea de Iglesias Pentecostales de Jesucristo, Inc.* (headquarters in Chicago, IL, but has historical ties to the same denomination in New York City and Puerto Rico) has mission work in the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico. The mother denomination in Puerto Rico, called *Iglesia Pentecostal de Jesucristo*, was founded in 1938 under the leadership of the Rev. Félix Rivera Cardona. During the 1940s, many church members migrated to New York City, where a U.S. branch was established in 1946-1947 under the name *Concilio de las Iglesias Pentecostales de Jesucristo* by the Rev. Eduardo Pagan.

**The Evangelistic Tabernacle of the Dominican Republic** - *Tabernáculo Evangelístico de La República Dominicana* (TELRD), founded in 1969, is affiliated with the Worldwide Missionary Movement established in Puerto Rico in 1963 by the Rev. Luis M. Ortiz, formerly associated with the Pentecostal Church of God, International Mission (1944-1960) as a missionary in Cuba. Today, the Dominican denomination reports 140 churches nationally, with its headquarters in Santo Domingo. The mother church in Santo Domingo is called *Tabernáculo Evangelístico Movimiento Misionero Mundial*.

**The Missionary Association of Pentecostal Churches** - *Asociación Misionera de Iglesias Pentecostales* (AMIP) was founded in Puerto Rico in 2003 by the Rev. José D. Muñoz. This denomination is the result of a division in the Worldwide Missionary Movement in Puerto Rico,

founded by Luis. M. Ortiz in 1963. The AMIP reports that it has affiliated churches in the Dominican Republic, some of which may have been part of TELRD previously.

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In July 2009, Guillermo Conard , Vice President of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association announced the launching of a nationwide evangelistic effort, called “My Hope in the Dominican Republic” - *Mi Esperanza en la República Dominicana*, with the participation of an estimated 3,000 local churches that will be mobilized throughout the nation during 2010. This effort will be conducted on two tracks: (1) the preparation of three TV programs of 30 minutes each with brief messages by Dr. Billy Graham or his son Franklin, which will include special music and testimonies. These programs will be televised on one or more national TV channels; and (2) the implementation of “Matthew and his friends,” which will be conducted as a personal evangelism effort by training thousands of believers to invite their friends, neighbors and family members to their house for tea, coffee or a meal and to view the special TV program and invite them to receive “Jesus as their personal Savior.”

This effort is being coordinated by a **National Steering Committee** presided by the Rev. Elvis Samuel Medina of the Church of God (Cleveland, TN), and it includes 26 other distinguished members: Alejandro Pérez Gerónimo (Asambleas de Dios), Francisco Martínez (Convención Bautista Dominicana), Reynaldo Franco Aquino (CODUE), Braulio Portes (CNI), Gilda Peralta (CONACOPE), Elías S. Peña (CONEDO e Iglesia Metodista Libre), Jorge Reynoso (Red Pastoral), Lorenzo Mota King (Sociedad Bíblica Dominicana), René Acosta (Iglesia del Nazareno), Jorge Marrero (Iglesia de Dios de la Profecía), Moisés Martínez Mateo (Iglesia de Dios Pentecostal, MI), Ezequiel Molina (Radio VEN, Mahanaim), Eduardo Marte (Alianza Cristiana Misionera), Lucy Cosme (Puerta de Libertad y Bendición), Manuel Mejía (Hermanos Unidos en Cristo), Alejandro Figueroa (Iglesia Evangélica Dominicana), Marcial Reyes (Asamblea Cristiana), Manuel Medina (Iglesia Templos Bíblicos-WorldTeam), Sergio Obdulio Santana (Concilio Interamericano), Marilyn Orozco (Asociación Cristo Viene), Francia Arias de Cornelio (Asambleas de Dios, Santiago), Marino González (Concilio Arca de Salvación), Kléber Lora (Compasión Internacional), Julio César Holguín (Iglesia Episcopal Dominicana), Salustiano Mojica (UNEV) and Pierre Philippe (Liga Bíblica).

The Executive Council is composed of nine members of the National Steering Committee. The National Coordinator is the Rev. Miguel García. The program is divided into various stages: vision, training, mobilization, implementation (March 2010), and follow-up. Below is an update on that national effort.

As of 16 March 2010, some 45,000 Christians across the Dominican Republic were trained and ready to share their faith as part of the largest evangelistic outreach in the Caribbean nation's history. On Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 18-20 March, these Christians will implement the latest project of My Hope, carried out in partnership with the Charlotte, N.C.-based Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA).

"Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ is always important, but religious leaders in the Dominican Republic believe now is a particularly opportune time for churches there to reach out beyond their walls," said Bill Conard, vice president of international ministries at BGEA. "These Christians are taking a bold stand for Jesus Christ, and we know God will honor their efforts."

Those involved in the outreach will host neighbors, relatives and friends to watch three compelling nationwide TV programs, which feature testimonies from two of the most famous Dominicans: St. Louis Cardinals star first baseman Albert Pujols and musician Juan Luis Guerra. The programs also feature sermons from Billy and Franklin Graham, dubbed into Spanish.

After watching the program, the hosts will share their own stories of coming to faith and invite those present to make a commitment to Jesus Christ. Follow-up efforts are made afterwards to help these new believers become involved in a local church body, in order to learn and grow in their faith.

Source: <http://www.christiannewswire.com/news/5717713323.html>

After months of preparation, the “My Hope” programs in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico culminated in a combined total of more than 59,000 home events in March and April, which included a TV program featuring a sermon from Billy or Franklin Graham and a personal testimony from the host. In the Dominican Republic, 55,391 people made commitments to Christ, with 13,797 doing so in Puerto Rico. Altogether more than 5,500 churches from across the evangelical spectrum were involved in the projects [in both countries].

Source: <http://www.billygraham.org/articlepage.asp?articleid=6160>

### *Protestant Ecumenical groups*

**The Dominican Confederation of Evangelical Unity - *Confederación Dominicana de Unidad Evangélica*** (CODUE), founded in 1992, is a consortium of denominations, federations, institutions and evangelical churches whose fundamental doctrines are based on the Bible. Historically, it has been led by the following ministers: Modesto Edwards (1992-1994), Miguel García Frías (1994-1998), Andrés Eduardo Rincón (1998-2000), Silverio Manuel Bello (2000-2004), and Reynaldo Franco Aquino (2004-actual).

CODUE’s vision is to promote greater unity among evangelicals for the purpose of improving the socio-spiritual condition of the nation. Its mission is to develop programs and activities that serve to maintain the church-society relationship in order to offer solutions to the nation’s problems. Currently, the membership of CODUE includes 203 organizations, representing an estimated 5,000 local evangelical churches nationally, which makes this organization the most representative of the evangelical population in the Dominican Republic.

**CLAI (*Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias*) members in the Dominican Republic include the following:** Iglesia Metodista Libre Dominicana; Iglesia de Dios, Inc. (a Pentecostal denomination founded in Puerto Rico); Iglesia Episcopal Dominicana; Comunión Anglicana; Iglesia Evangélica Dominica (a united effort by the United Brethren in Christ, Methodist Episcopal Church, and Northern Presbyterians, beginning in 1917); Templos Evangélicos (founded by West Indies Mission/WorldTeam); and Iglesias Bautistas de República Dominicana (affiliated with American Baptist Churches in the USA).

- **CONELA (*Confraternidad Evangélica Latinoamericana*)** members include: ? (need info)

- ***Consejo Nacional de Confraternidad de Pastores*** (CONACOPE), *Confraternidad Evangélica* (CONEDO), *Consejo Nacional de Iglesias* (CNI).—need descriptions

## *Protestant university and theological education programs in the DR.*

**The National Evangelical University - Universidad Nacional Evangélica (UNEV)** in Santo Domingo is sponsored by the Evangelical University Foundation, which received government approval in April 1985 by the National Council of Higher Education (CONES). UNEV is a member of the Dominican Association of Universities - *Asociación Dominicana de Universidades* (ADOU) and is affiliated with: the Caribbean Evangelical Theological Association with headquarters in Jamaica; the *Confraternidad Evangélica Dominicana* (CONEDO); and the *Confederación Dominicana de Unidad Evangélica* (CODUE). It has international accords with the *Confederación de Universidades Cristianas* (CONDUCE); the Study Abroad Program of Azusa Pacific University (APUNEV) in Southern California; Columbia University; Baylor University; *Centro Educativo Strong* de San Juan, Puerto Rico; *la Escuela Internacional de Educación Física y Deportes de Cuba*; *el Instituto Cubano de Ciencias Pedagógicas y la Universidad de Pinar del Río*; as well as denominational and para-church organizations. The Rector is Lic. Salustiano Bolívar Mojica Rijo.

Protestant seminaries (university-level) include the following. The Episcopal Diocese of the Dominican Republic has its own seminary, which is located in Santo Domingo and on the same property of Epiphany Episcopal Church. Other institutions are the Seminario Bíblico Cristiano del Caribe, the Seminario Bíblico de la Iglesia de Dios, and the Seminario Teológico Bautista Dominicano. In addition, there are dozens of Bible institutes that operate at the pre-university level. **The Latin American Theological Fraternity** (*Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana, FTL*) has a chapter in Santo Domingo.

### **Other Religions**

**In 2006**, 2.3 percent of the population claimed to be adherents of other religions, which include a broad spectrum of religious beliefs and practices: Spiritist 2.2 percent, Buddhist 0.1 percent, Bahá'í 0.1 percent, Islam 0.02 percent, Judaism 0.01 percent, and Chinese Folk Religion 0.1 percent (see the Dominican Embassy website).

**The Independent Western Catholic tradition** includes the Hispanic-Brazilian Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, St. Pius X, founded in Brooklyn, NY, by Monseñor Héctor González in 1958. Later he established affiliated parishes in Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and Brazil.

In September 2009, the president of the Dominican Republic signed an act to transfer a plot of land to the first **Russian Orthodox Church** parish (affiliated with the **Moscow Patriarchate**) to be built in Santo Domingo, where over 1,500 Russian immigrants live. The **Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR)** sponsors the Kazan Mother of God Mission in Sosua, Puerto Plata, under the direction of priest Rafael Martínez González. The **Diocese of South America and Buenos Aires of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad under Bishop Alexander (Mileant)**, with international headquarters in La Canada, CA, has two affiliated groups in the DR: Iglesia Ortodoxa San Nicolás El Taumaturgo in Puerto Plata and Capilla San Alejo in Jarabacoa, both under the supervision of Rector Protoiereij Amvrosij.

**Marginal Christian groups include** the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), which arrived in 1978; in 2009, it reported 114,571 members in 2,000 local churches. The

Jehovah's Witnesses began their evangelistic activity immediately after World War II and reported 320 groups with 29,158 adherents in 2008. Also, present are the Unity School of Christianity (Association of Unity Churches International), Philadelphia Church of God (USA), Mita Congregation and Voice of the Corner Stone (both from Puerto Rico), Growing in Grace Ministries International (Miami, FL), Universal Church of the Kingdom of God and the God is Love Pentecostal Church (both of the later from Brazil).

*Non-Christian Religions include Buddhism, Chinese Folk religion, Hinduism, Islam, Baha'i Faith, Judaism, Ancient Wisdom, Animism and Psychic-Spiritualist-New Age traditions.*

**Buddhism.** There is a small **Buddhist** community, consisting primarily of Chinese and Japanese expatriates who participate in the **Zen Center of Santo Domingo** (Japanese Soto), the **True Buddha School**, and **Soka Gakkai International**. In addition, there is a **Zen Master Thich Naht Hanh Group** in Santo Domingo. Also, some of the Chinese immigrants practice a variety of folk religions that are centered on the veneration of their ancestors.

**Hinduism.** International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), Transcendental Meditation (TM), and the International Sri Sathya Sai Baba Organization.

**Islam.** There are an estimated 5,000-10,000 **Muslim** residents, which include many foreign students. Muslim students and local organizations, such as the *Círculo Islámico de República Dominicana* (The Islamic Circle of Dominican Republic) and the Islamic Center of the Dominican Republic (located in Miami), have helped spread Islam in this country. The Gurdjieff Society in Santo Domingo: Fourth Way Seminars on the teachings and ideas of G. I. Gurdjieff and J. G. Bennett (Sufism—the inner, mystical dimension of Islam). There are also an unknown number of local spiritual assemblies of the **Baha'i Faith** in the Republic.

**The Círculo Islámico** established the first mosque in the Dominican Republic in the center of Santo Domingo, about a five minute walk from the Palacio de Policía Nacional and the Universidad Iberoamericana (UNIBE). The mosque is open daily for the five prayers (*salat*) and offers classes on Islamic studies for ladies and children on weekends. They also provide free medical consultation along with a free pharmacy, Consulta Al-Foutory, which is located in a separate building at the back of the mosque. Presently, there might be as many as three mosques in Santo Domingo, including **Masjid-e-Islam**, **Masjid-e-Makki** and **Masjid-al-Noor**, although the former two are no longer believed to be active. Masjid al Noor is the only active Masjid (mosque) in the DR and receives the bulk of the Muslim population for the two Eids, Ramadan, Salat al Jummah, and the five daily prayers. However, another Masjid is under construction in Los Llanos, roughly a 30 minute drive from Mezquita al Noor in Santo Domingo.

**Judaism** reappeared in the Dominican Republic in the late 1930s. During World War II, a group of Jews escaping Nazi Germany fled to the Dominican Republic and founded the city of Sosúa. It has remained the center of the Jewish population since. The current population of known Jews in the Dominican Republic is approximately 300, the majority live in Santo Domingo, the capital. A very high percentage of the nation's Jews have intermarried although some spouses have formalized their Judaism through conversions and participate in Jewish communal life. There are three synagogues and one Sephardic Jewish Educational Center. One is the Centro Israelita de Repúb-

lica Dominicana in Santo Domingo, another is a Chabad outreach center also in Santo Domingo, and another is in the country's first established community in Sosúa.

**The Ancient Wisdom tradition** is represented by the Ancient and Mystical Order of the Rosae-cruz (AMORC) with two lodges: Luz del Cibao Pronaos in Santiago de los Caballeros, and the Santo Domingo Lodge. Also, there are at least 20 groups in the country affiliated with the International Gnostic Movement, such as AGEAC (Asociación Gnóstica de Estudios Antropológicos Culturales y Científicos) in Santiago de los Caballeros, and the Universal Gnostic Christian Movement, both of which originated in the teachings of V.M. **Samael Aun Weor** (b.1917-d.1977).

**Freemasonry** arrived in the Dominican Republic during the period of Haitian occupation (1821-1844) and seemed to prosper during the First Republic (1844-1861), but these lodges were all closed during the brief Spanish occupation (1861-1865). Nevertheless, the following lodges were founded on the dates indicated: Gran Logia de la República Dominicana (1858 by Tomás de Bobadilla in Santo Domingo), la Cuna de América No. 2 (1859, also in Santo Domingo); Concordia No. 3 (1859 in La Vega); Perfecta Armonía No. 4 (1859 in Azua); Santiago, Nuevo Mundo No. 5 (1859 in Santiago de los Caballeros); La Fe (1861 in Santo Domingo); and La Restauración No. 11 (1868 in Puerto Plata). The Grand Council of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite was founded in Santo Domingo in 1861. Its headquarters are in the Colonial Zone of Santo Domingo. Some of these lodges still exist and others have been founded more recently.

**The Animistic tradition** is represented by Santería (from Cuba and Puerto Rico), Myalism and Obeah (from Jamaica and the West Indies), Vodou (from Haiti) and Gagá (Rada spirits traced to the Arada region of the former Kingdom of Dahomey in West Africa), which are an important part of Dominican culture. Although Gagá is of Haitian origin, it has been practiced in the Dominican Republic for many generations, to the point that a Dominican variation of Gagá has emerged. The cultural manifestation of Gagá is its dance and its music, which seeks to celebrate the fertilization of the earth and is celebrated in the Spring. The religious manifestation of Gagá is related to Vodou and Santería. Gagá was born in the *bateyes* (company towns) of the sugarcane plantations, where Haitians were brought to work in the sugar fields and lived with their families. Since then, the pattern of Haitian migration has changed drastically; today, Haitian immigrants concentrate in urban areas and work mainly in the construction industry as well as the informal economic sector.

Traditionally, most Haitian immigrants and their descendants in the DR adhered to Vodou and practiced it in secret because the Dominican government and the general population regarded the folk religion as pagan and African. In Haiti, Vodou includes a well-defined system of hierology (literature or learning regarding sacred things) and ceremonialism.

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The New York City-based musical group, “La 21 División,” is one of few groups performing and preserving Afro-Dominican music in the USA. The group’s name is derived from the Afro-Dominican religion also known as Vodou or Santería Dominicana. La 21 División alludes to the 21 African “nations” (or divisions) that make up the religion. Each “nation” is led by one deity or *santo*.

La División 21 is a hierarchy of spirits (*loases*) that offer different gifts (*dones*) or supernatural power to the people they possess (“spirit possession”), such as divination, curative abilities, protection from harm, good fortune, etc. Each nation or division of spirits has its own characteristics, such as color, drink and other attributes.

**Vodou Dominicana** came with the forced migration of Africans from the Congo region to work as slaves on the island’s plantations. As in much of the Caribbean, the slaves syncretized their deities with Catholic saints in order to continue worshipping their gods under the forced mask of Catholicism. This is why the religion may be called Santería and is why the deities are called *santos*. Spirit possession does occur at these ceremonies.

The following is a discussion of some of the music and dance occurring at these ceremonies. **Congos of the Holy Spirit (Congos del Espíritu Santo)** is a rhythm and dance that originated from the Brotherhood of the Holy Spirit (Cofradía del Espíritu Santo) in Villa Mella, a town located west of the capital of Santo Domingo. The Brotherhood has been in existence in the section of Villa Mella known as Mata los Indios since the late 1500’s when African slaves were first brought to the island. The Brotherhood is a funerary one that performs a “ritual of departure” once a year, known as the Festival of the Holy Spirit (la fiesta del Espíritu Santo) to recognize deceased members. Other gatherings to celebrate the birthdays of the deceased are known as *bancos* and are celebrated throughout the year. Performed with the rhythm of Congos del Espíritu Santo is a partner dance in which the female is the lead. The couple’s dance subtly mimics the courtship of the rooster and hen. The female gestures with a long, full skirt or with a handkerchief. The female also will pass the handkerchief to another woman to change partners. This festival is only found in Villa Mella.

On 18 May 2001, the Cultural Space of the **Brotherhood of the Holy Spirit of the Congos of Villa Mella** was proclaimed one of nineteen Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

**Palo**, which means wood or stick in English, is a similar rhythm to Congos of the Holy Spirit. The name Palo may also be used as generic name to refer to all Dominican folkloric rhythms. However, the name usually refers to the rhythm that is played on three tall drums. The largest of the three drums is named the *Palo mayor*, and the two smaller drums are called *Palo menor*. Each drum is made from a single tree trunk. The drums are accompanied by a *guira*, which is responsible for maintaining the rhythm. The Palo rhythm is described as the *real* national music of the Dominican Republic as opposed to popular meringue, which was born from folkloric music.

The dance of Palo is also similar to that of Congos of the Holy Spirit; however, the Palo dance is defined as being “smaller and more defined.” Like Congos of the Holy Spirit, Palo is danced in pairs; however, the male is the lead and he is in charge of changing partners by tapping another male on the shoulder.

**Gagá** derives from the carnivalesque Haitian Rará, which is an Afro-Creole processional celebration that has a specific rhythm and dance. The migration of Haitian Rará to the Dominican Republic results from the movement of laborers from Haiti to Dominican sugarcane fields. Gagá is practiced throughout the Dominican Republic. There are two types of Gagá in the country: one style is found in the western town of Elías Piña. This type is more theatrical and may depict police, kings and queens, and workers. This style also portrays dramatic renderings of rape and death. The other type of Gagá is seen as more rooted in spirituality and is less dramatic. The Gagá is performed in procession and is a celebration of life coming from death. Appropriately, it is syncretized with the Christian (Spanish and French Catholic-origins) celebration of Easter.

The music, including the songs and the instruments, have been adapted by Dominicans to their own culture. While most Gagá song lyrics are in Haitian Creole, there are now many songs in Spanish. There are also popular *merengue* songs performed to the Gagá rhythm. One of the key instruments is the *bambú* or *fututo*, which is called the *vaksin* in Haiti. As one of the names for the instrument suggests, the *bambú* was originally made of a piece of bamboo. However, *bambú* is now usually made of PVC tubing which is cheaper and breaks less easily. (Rodriguez adds that in New York City, PVC tubing is used since bamboo tends to crack in the cold weather.) The *bambú* form the baseline for the rhythm. The instrument is tapped and blown. The smaller *bambú* play a steady beat while the larger ones play a longer melody with low notes. The *cornet* or *clerón* is a metal horn that plays melodies with long notes. The order of the Gagá procession from front to back is: the *cornet*, dancers, *bambú*, drummers, and iron bells called *piano*.

In general, the movements of the dance are very strong and vigorous compared to the dances of Congos del Espiritu Santo and Palo. In Gagá the male dancers wear very colorful costumes. There is a lead character called the *mayor*, or major, who carries a baton-like stick. Rodriguez states that the stick is symbolic of weapons used in martial arts. The *mayor* also wears a series of colorful handkerchiefs tied around his waist. The end of each handkerchief is tied to a belt and drapes down from his waist. The colors of the handkerchiefs each correspond to a specific Vodou deity. The women in the Gagá are called queens and carry flags that signal specific codes to the rest of the group. The women's dance is more sensual than the male's dance and the couple's dance is called *tarea*, or homework in English. Other participants in the procession generally include people on stilts and people dressed in masks disguised as demons.

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**The Psychic-Spiritualist-New Age Tradition** is represented by Theosophy (founded in 1987); groups affiliated with the International Spiritist Council, founded in Brazil in 1992, based on the spiritist doctrine as codified by Allan Kardec; hundreds of freelance psychics/spiritists who advertize in the local media; and Silva Mind Control (aka, Silvan Method, a self-help program), a New Age group founded in Texas by José Silva (b.1914-d.1999), a parapsychologist, during the 1950s.

**Many Dominican Catholics practice religious syncretism**, which combines ancient animistic beliefs and practices of Amerindian and African-origins with a Roman Catholicism imposed on Native Americans and African slaves by civil and religious authorities during the Spanish/French colonial periods. The result is a "popular Catholicism" that retains significant elements of African and Amerindian spirituality, which includes animistic beliefs and practices such as **magic** (white and black, good and evil), **witchcraft** (*brujería*), **herbal healing** (*curanderismo*) and **shamanism** (the shaman is an intermediary with the spirit world).

**One of the famous Dominican "folk saints" is Olivorio Mateo Ledesma** (b.1874-d.1922, aka, "Dios Olivorio" - Olivorismo) who began a religious peasant movement in the southwestern part of the Republic in 1908. Olivorio was considered by the authorities to be a "religious fanatic." His popularity began in the village of La Maguana Arriba, located in the San Juan Valley, where he was an illiterate field laborer. After claiming to have seen a vision from God, Olivorio told his fellow villagers, "I am sent from God on a mission that will last 33 years; everyone who believes in me will be saved." During the next 14 years, Olivorio was an itinerant preacher, prophet and healer (*curandero*) who convinced many peasants that "the great power of God" is present to heal people of their infirmities. His followers (an estimated 1,000 or more, called *olivoristas*) were

persecuted by the authorities and other outsiders in the name of progress and nationalism. Their religion was called “a superstitious mishmash conjuring up primitive beliefs based on animism and witchcraft.”

Olivorio was shot dead by the police in 1922, after a five-year manhunt by the U.S. occupation forces (1916-1924) and the Dominican troops, along with dozens of his followers. However, this messianic movement did not die but rather went underground until the 1950s, under the leadership of José Popa who claimed to have received the “spirit of Olivorio.” *Olivorismo* was revived as the Palma Sola religion under the leadership of Ramón Mora in La Jagua and brothers Plinio and León Ventura Rodríguez, who were labeled alternatively as “communists,” “guerillas,” “voodooists” and “religious manipulators.” The repression of the Palma Sola movement in 1962 by Dominican public security forces, in which hundreds of *olivoristas* were killed, dealt a fatal blow to *olivorismo* as an organized peasant movement. However, thousands of *sanjuaneros* (people of the San Juan Valley) continue to revere “Dios Olivorio” and call upon his departed spirit to heal their infirmities and grant them favors.

In addition, many *sanjuaneros* are convinced that Native American spirits live in caves and springs and that these spirits, together with the Vodou gods (called “misterios”), are able to communicate with humans through powerful mediums (shamans) who serve as the intermediaries between the world of the living and the supernatural sphere.

Compiled and Edited by Clifton L. Holland

Last updated on 21 October 2010

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