

# "From Columbus to Leonel"

A history of the Dominican Republic from the age of the Taínos to the present administration of Leonel Fernandez

by ***Dominican Advance*** President Kim Pensinger

Matt 28:19-20

*"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (New International Version)*

## ***I. The Importance of Arriving***

### TWO ARRIVALS

Over the intercom aboard the jet you are flying in, comes, "Señores pasajeros, por favor, tomen sus asientos y retornen su bandeja y su asiento a su posición original. El tripulante está haciendo los últimos preparativos para el aterrizaje."

Then, in heavily accented English, you hear, "Ladies and gentlemen, please return your trays and seats to their upright position. The crew is making their final preparations for landing."

As the jet engines whine and as you look out the window through the breaking cloud cover below, you realize that it is finally happening – you're arriving in the Dominican Republic - the place of Kingdom service you have dreamt about and trained for over the last six months. Within minutes you will be on the ground, breathing Dominican air, and anticipating God's Spirit using you to bless the people of the Dominican Republic and to strengthen the outreach of ***New Missions*** in that land.

Your mind goes back to the initial presentation of the vision for the trip. You recall the struggle you had arriving at the conclusion that God did indeed want you to be part of His Kingdom expression on the island of Hispaniola. You wondered how the money would be raised and if you had sufficient faith for the challenge. As you trace in your mind the steps of faith that He called you to, you realize that He was in it all the way. His provision, His wisdom, and His love for the Dominicans somehow, someway, were released into your life. Now the moment has arrived! You are ready to do your best for His glory during the week you will spend co-laboring with Him. There is the expectation of many things ahead to learn and of many rewards to be reaped; but for now, above all, you are pleased that the moment has indeed arrived.

Stop and consider for a moment the importance of arriving. There are people who spend all of their lives preparing but never arrive. There may have been several people who originally signed up for your ministry team or who expressed interest in going to the Dominican Republic but for one reason or another – some within their control and others outside of their control – they failed to arrive at the desired destination. Life, in fact, is a series of arrivals – keeping the appointments we have in the will and service of God that He has ordained for us. The Bible contains the accounts of those who never arrived: Lot’s wife, who longingly looked back; Esau, who lightly esteemed his birthright; and Gehazi, the greedy disciple of Elisha – all failed to reach their original destination in God. There were people who prepared but failed to arrive. No matter how much significance we attach to preparing, we must never lose sight of the goal of preparation, which is the arrival.

There was another who prepared for a trip to this island and who arrived before you. His arrival changed the course of mankind and is ranked as the most significant event in all of history, behind only the first appearance of Christ.<sup>1</sup> The instant Christopher Columbus set foot on the “Isla de Espanola” (“Island of Hispaniola”) in 1492 the life of every person in Europe, North and South America, and nine million Africans were to change forever! Though his vision was developed over many decades and his preparations were extensive, the act of his arrival was of paramount importance.

## ***II. The Arrival of Christopher Columbus***

### THE CONTRAST

Since the early 1990’s more and more Americans have been discovering the island of Hispaniola in general and the country of the Dominican Republic specifically. It is also true that during the same time more and more Dominicans have been discovering life in the United States – more specially, life in New York City.<sup>2</sup>

Today the Dominican Republic boasts a population of about 8 million inhabitants – most of whom live in and around the capital, Santo Domingo. In an area of approximately 18,000 square miles, which is two-thirds of the island of Hispaniola (the other third belongs to Haiti), this population of mixed European and African descendants raises their families, earns a living, and interacts with the world outside of their island nation. The present population is young – a full 40% of all Dominicans are under the age of 15. The modern Dominican Republic has a rapidly developing tourism industry, several important sports teams (baseball), in

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<sup>1</sup> *A Brief History of the Caribbean*, Jan Rogozinski, p. 24 “Franciso Lopez de Gomara described the Iberian seafarer’s discovery... as ‘the greatest event since the creation of the world, apart from the incarnation and death of Him who created it.’ Just over two centuries later, Adam Smith... stated virtually the same thing when he wrote, ‘The discovery of America and that of a passage to the East Indies by the Cape of Good Hope are the two greatest and most important events recorded in the history of mankind.’”

<sup>2</sup> *The Dominican Republic and Haiti*, The Discovery Channel, p. 62 “About a million Dominicans live in the US, mostly in and around New York, and they send an estimated \$1.5 billion home each year.”

addition to the traditional agricultural industries of sugar cane harvest and cigar manufacturing. The contrast with the times that preceded the arrival of the great Explorer (Columbus) could not be greater.

#### THE GREAT EXPLORER

It is probable that Christopher Columbus had a lifetime sense of mission. His name “Christopher” means *Christ-bearer*. And as his journals indicate, the idea for bringing Christ to islands and lands unknown was never far from his thinking. He often quoted Isa. 49:1, 6 “*Listen to me, O coastlands, and hearken, you peoples from afar. The LORD called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name... I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth*” and took from it strength to encourage himself in times of doubt. However, it could well have been in 1484, when working as a mapmaker along side of his brother, Bartolomeo, in Lisbon, Portugal, that he decided to act. Columbus had just turned 33 – the *Anno de Cristo*, as the Italians say, and according to folk tradition, it was the year for divine revelation and action.<sup>3</sup> For in that year he presented his plan to sail east in search of a direct route to the lands of China, Japan, and India to King John II of Portugal.

The best map of his day, one with which he was quite familiar as a mapmaker, was based on Marco Polo’s eye-witness account of his journey to the Far East. According to this map, the lands of Cathay (China) and Chiambra (India), and the fabulous islands of Cipangu (Japan) lie just 4,700 miles to the west of Lisbon. However, Columbus, through his own voyages and calculations, had reached the conclusion that the distance from the Canary Islands to Cipangu was only 2,760 miles. Though his own calculations were far from accurate, God knew that something did lie just 3,300 miles to the west – not Cipangu – but an entirely new continent of inhabited land that was one day to be known as the New World.

King John II dutifully turned over Columbus’s plan to a royal commission. After short deliberations, the commission returned the verdict that his proposal was utter nonsense and rejected it out of hand. A similar response awaited Bartolomeo’s proposal before Henry VII of England. Columbus now became convinced that God had reserved for Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain the honor of sending forth the expedition that would bring the Gospel to undiscovered lands.<sup>4</sup> Yet, the audience with the Catholic Majesties of Spain did not come until 1486 and it took the royal commission of Spain four and a half years to return a similar verdict as that of their counterparts in Portugal and England. Though all hope seemed to be lost as far as Columbus was concerned, Ferdinand and Isabella did not close the door entirely to his vision. They encouraged him to wait until the Moors had been completely vanquished from Spanish soil following the last crusade. His opportunity did come with the fall of the Alhambra (the Moorish citadel) in the heart of the city of Granada. Buoyed by their recent triumph and looking for new

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<sup>3</sup> *The Light and the Glory*, Peter and David Marshall, p. 32

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 33

lands to conquer the king and queen of Spain accepted his proposal, and eventually accepted his terms – a tenth part of all treasure from the lands discovered, the title of Admiral of the Ocean Sea, and the positions of Viceroy and Governor over all discovered lands.

The next eight months were some of the happiest in Columbus's unique life. During this time of preparation, he outfitted his three caravels, the *Nina*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa Maria*, hired first-class crews, and raised the necessary capital to finance his plan. Along the way, he befriended two expert mariners, Martin and Vicente Pinzón who shared his vision and commitment. On August 3, 1492, he knelt to receive Holy Communion, then took command of his small fleet, and "in the Name of Jesus" set sail for his great adventure.

The very first place that Christopher Columbus stepped down on terra firma in the New World was a small island in the Bahamas that he named *San Salvador* (Holy Savior). He made this entry in his journal, "*The people call this island Guanabani... I want the natives to develop a friendly attitude toward us because I know they are a people who can be converted to our Holy Faith more by love than by force. I think they can easily be made Christians for they seem to have no religion.*"<sup>5</sup> Quickly judging by the size of the island that there was much to discover, he set sail due southwest. His journal entry says that he was off in search of gold and jewelry having observed the gold rings in the ears and noses of San Salvador's inhabitants.

It was not until December 5<sup>th</sup> that bad weather blew him ashore again, this time on the large island that its inhabitants called *Bobío*. Columbus re-named it *Española*, which in English today we call Hispaniola. He, along with the Pinzón brothers spent the next few weeks exploring the coasts of the island of Hispaniola until Christmas Day 1492. On that day, as the crewmembers of the *Santa Maria* slept a sudden swell arose that carried the ship aground, not far from present-day Puerto Plata. Thinking the worst, Columbus, used the wood from the wreckage to begin construction of a fort and to establish a small 39-man garrison on the island. He named the place *La Navidad* (Christmas or "the Nativity"). He reasoned that the men would be able to defend themselves against any danger and through trade would be able to gather gold from the natives on the island. He anticipated that within a three-year period of time they would be able to seize possession of the gold mine known to exist on the island and to use the treasure to finance what he considered the greatest expedition of all – the liberation of the Holy Land from the grip of the Muslims ("the Crusades"). He once wrote in his journal, "*For I maintained to your Highnesses that all profits from this enterprise should be devoted to the conquest of Jerusalem, and your Highnesses smiled and said that such was your will, and that even without these gains, you had the same earnest desire.*"<sup>6</sup> After leaving the men with enough rations and ammunition for one year, and

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<sup>5</sup> *I Columbus, My Journal, 1492-93*, Peter and Connie Roop, editors, p. 30, 31

<sup>6</sup> *The Light and the Glory*, p. 45

promising them the he would return, Columbus sailed away to Spain to claim his title, riches, and fame.

### **III. The Importance of Paradigms<sup>7</sup>**

#### THE TAÍNO PEOPLE

Everything about *Bobío* or the *Isla Española* impressed Columbus. From the moment he saw it and contemplated its beauty and became acquainted with the native people, he could think of no other place on earth. He wrote of it, "...*fertile to an excessive degree... and filled with trees of a thousand kinds and tall, seeming to touch the sky... the most inexpressively beautiful place on earth.*"<sup>8</sup> A popular tour billboard says of Hispaniola, "(it is) *the place Columbus loved best*". He found the natives of the island to be among the most friendly, docile, and trusting that he had ever encountered.

The people Columbus and crew met on the island were by no means "savages". They called themselves Taínos and called their island "Ayiti" (Haiti), meaning "high ground". They had come to the island from the area of Venezuela some 500 years before. A peace loving and handsome people<sup>9</sup>, they had but one enemy tribe, the Caribs – a warlike people who snatched away the victims of their assaults to be eaten on neighboring islands. While at first the Taínos viewed the Spaniards as somewhat more than men because of their shining armor and plumed clothing, they came to think of them as only slightly more civilized than the Caribs.

The Taínos lived in structured communities that revolved around the extended family. Grouped together in settlements of about a thousand people, each settlement had its own *cacique* or chief, who also doubled as the village priest. These men were supported and advised by a council of elders that also helped organize the village labor according to age and gender. Land was owned and worked by the community. The Taínos were farmers, raising sweet potatoes, peanuts and beans. Their staple was cassava or manioc that provided a type of flour for baking. The abundance of fish, fowl, and fresh game rounded out their diet. Columbus noted the health of the people and commented that there was not "a big belly among them".

The influence the Taínos had upon the Spanish is evidenced by their words that worked their way into the Spanish language and eventually into American English. They cooked on an open grilled called a *bárbacoa* (barbeque), suffered loss and death when a *huracán* (hurricane) punished the island. They traveled in *canauas* (canoes), smoked *tobaco* (tobacco), relaxed in *hamacas* (hammocks), and planted *maiz* (maize or corn).

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<sup>7</sup> "paradigm" – an example or model that has wide spread acceptance and use

<sup>8</sup> *The Dominican Republic and Haiti*, p. 23

<sup>9</sup> *I Columbus, My Journal, 1492-1493*, p. 42 "*The people have no spears, arrows or other arms. I cannot believe that we have found a people with such good hearts, so liberal in giving and so timid that they strip themselves of everything to give all they have to us.*"

Devoid of knowledge of the One true and Living God, they worshipped a trilogy of gods represented by male, female, and dog-like figures. They worshipped nature and the souls of their departed ancestors. Fetishes, called *zemís*, exerted power over their health and behavior. The *cacique* resorted to certain hallucinogenic substances when presiding over the religious ceremonies.

The Spaniards were amazed at many aspects of their civilization. Not least among them was their love of sport, particularly *batey* – a team sport played with a rubber ball on a hard packed dirt court. Teams of 10 to 30 players propelled and bounced the ball without the use of hands or feet. These courts were also used for other occasions such as celebrations involving dance, marriages, and funerals.

#### PARADISE LOST

Columbus's second voyage to the New World would establish a paradigm that would plant the seeds of misery, poverty, and enslavement that still haunts much of Latin America to this day. Always mindful of the symbolic meanings of his name, "Christopher" – *Christbearer*, and "Columbus" – *colonizer*, he vacillated between the two almost constantly. While giving Christian names to practically all of his discovery and erecting many crosses, he saw much of his discovery in purely economic terms – even entertaining in his thoughts the enslavement of the inhabitants of the lands from the very beginning. In the process of "going into all the world", he failed to preach, disciple, and teach. His "going" rapidly became a means for personal profit, dominion, and vainglory.<sup>10</sup>

He returned to Hispaniola with a fleet of 17 ships carrying over 1,200 men, animals, seeds and sugar shoots, and some 200 *hidalgos* (Spanish noblemen) - everything he needed to sow the seeds of a new civilization after razing the old. After discovering that the men of *La Navidad* had been massacred and the village destroyed, Columbus set about establishing new colonial settlements; one on the north coast (*La Isabella*<sup>11</sup> – near present day Luperón), another in the interior where goldmines were thought to exist (*Cibao*), and a third on the southern coast. This last settlement became the first European city in the New World. Columbus called it *La Nueva Isabella*, but today it is the capital of the Dominican Republic and is called *Santo Domingo* (Holy Sunday).

His labors on this second voyage resulted in the establishment of the first European colony in the New World. Columbus, through the authority of the Spanish Crown, set the economic and social paradigms that were to endure for generations. They started first on the island of Hispaniola under the name of

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 42 – a typical prayer of Columbus – "*May Our Lord, Who has all things in His Hands, assist me and direct me in finding the gold.*"

<sup>11</sup> *The Dominican Republic and Haiti*, p. 220 – "*Some of the remnants of this short-lived town have been unearthed and preserved in the Parque Nacional Histórico La Isabela. Here you can see the foundations of Christopher Columbus's original house, and a cemetery containing both Taíno and Spanish buried chambers. A museum contains some interesting artifacts, believed to have belonged to those early colonists, and provides information about the Taínos in pre-Columbian days.*"

*repartimiento* (distribution), and later were institutionalized throughout Latin America under the banner of *encomienda* (commission or stewardship). This scheme of colonization gave “settlers’ rights” to wealthy Spaniards who would work the land, build dwellings, and remain on the land for a minimum of four years. After that time, the land essentially became theirs and they could sell it, give it away, or will it to their families. On Hispaniola, the colonists directly answered to Columbus and were to be paid for their labors.

#### A DESTRUCTIVE PARADIGM

Designed to encourage colonization of the New World for Spain, the *repartimiento* or *encomienda* (as it was more widely known) produced a paradigm with the chief characteristics of a society that, A) Amassed wealth for the families of white Spanish noblemen and sustained them in power through exclusive land ownership and slavery, and B) Placed the seat of real authority 3,000 miles away from the arena of activity. In essence, Spain transplanted medieval serfdom, where each landowner managed his own “kingdom” into the New World. Backed by the power of the Crown and the Catholic Church, generations of wealthy Spanish families seized the New World for their own personal enrichment and perpetuation. Because the noblemen did not come to the New World to work, rather to own and control, their fortunes were largely determined by a continual supply of slave labor and their ability to curry favor with those who sat on the throne of *patria* (fatherland). As the landowners found themselves without checks and balances to their own authority<sup>12</sup>, ruling over people of a different race, and without any incentive for the welfare of those under them, they rapidly developed and perpetuated four evils that continue to plague the whole of Latin America today: 1) Greed, 2) Cruelty, 3) Racism, and 4) Lawlessness. In addition, a fifth “evil” is often thrown into the mix – a Catholic Church that exists to perpetuate the existing status quo rather than invigorating the hearts and minds of the common people to faith and prosperity. Inherent within the call to “make disciples of all nations” is the challenge of producing a people for whom obedience to God is the first and primary objective.

The arrival *en masse* of the Spanish settlers spelled disaster for the native population on Hispaniola. There can be no question that the Spanish occupation totally destroyed (Taíno) society and led to the extinction of the (Taíno) race.<sup>13</sup> In 1492 when Columbus first set foot upon the island, he described the population as “without number”. According to the census of 1570, there remained only an estimated 500 Taínos<sup>14</sup>. A photograph of one of the last remaining Taínos, taken in the mid-1800s, can be found in the appendix of this syllabus. No representative of the Taíno people remained after the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>12</sup> *A Brief History of the Caribbean, P. 25* "Local official had a great latitude in applying royal decrees simply because it literally took months and years for such orders to reach the Americas from Madrid."

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* p. 46

#### ***IV. The Arrival of the African Slaves***

##### BARTOLOME DE LAS CASAS AND THE ISSUE OF SLAVERY

The death or extermination of the native Dominicans and the riches to be gained through the now established sugar trade seemed to lead inevitably to the importation of African slaves. With a small Spanish population now used to working plantations and mills with slave labor from the island, the thought of other large numbers of Spaniards coming to labor in the sugar fields was preposterous. Warring African tribes had been selling the human spoils of war to Europeans for years prior to the discovery of the New World. There was now a demand for large-scale trade in human labor that did not need to be rewarded with wages or the hope of upward societal mobility. The island of Hispaniola was the ideal place for this endeavor to begin in earnest.

Bartolomé de Las Casas, the famous “Apostle to the Indies” spent an entire lifetime advocating in defense of the native Indians of the islands of the Caribbean. He arrived in Santo Domingo in 1502 and was a first hand observer of the decimation of the Taínos. His sermons, tracts, and lobbying the royal government did more than anything or anyone else to alleviate the horror of slavery among the native peoples. However, it was this same Las Casas who proposed the alternative – black slavery. The religious reasoning, though twisted for sure, easily convinced the Spanish Crown: it was unjust and sinful for a Christian nation to enslave its own subjects (in this case, the Indians on Hispaniola), but there was nothing wrong with using heathens as slaves in order to promote the welfare of a Christian state. Portugal had already been selling African slaves to Islamic countries for hundreds of years. To increase the trade and to ship the human cargo to the islands was seen as simply the next step in the process.

##### AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE

The labor of black slaves was the basis for life on the sugar islands from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Economically, socially, and politically, slavery dominated the islands to an extent never matched in human history. By the 1750s, almost nine out of ten men and women were slaves on all the islands where sugar was grown. Never before in human history had so high a proportion of a population been slaves.<sup>15</sup>

As time passed and as the economy of the islands developed, so the tasks performed by the Africans tended to diversify. At first, most African worked the field on the sugar estates. Then some became drivers, other skilled craftsmen, and still others were assigned duties that gave them wide latitude of authority and autonomy. The slaves living in the seaports of the Virgin Islands, Curacao, and the Bahamas enjoyed the greatest freedom. While Spain was the largest buyer of African slaves, they did not participate in the Atlantic slave trade. Between 1690-1807 (the height of the Atlantic slave trade), Britain exported some 2,500,000 slaves to the Caribbean and Spanish America.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 125

Almost all slaves came from West Africa from tribes living within 200 miles of the coast. As the slave trade extended itself, the draw of those selling the Africans into slavery increased. During the 1800s, their reach extended as far down the African continent to the Congo, Angola, and Mozambique. Most new slaves were taken in war, kidnapped on raids disguised as wars, or convicted as criminals.<sup>16</sup> The make-up of the slave shipments was tilted heavily in favor of adult males. Since female slaves were higher in price and children were rarely considered (only 10% of all slaves sold to work in the Americas were under the age of 10), most ships were filled with black males.

Death rates for the journey across the Atlantic were high. Though most ships carried a surgeon and some medical supplies, estimates of the number of slaves who died in the crossing have gone as high as 8 million over the 300-year course of the slave trade. An average loss of life among slave cargo was 20% before 1700.

#### LIFE OF AN AFRICAN ON A SUGAR ISLAND

Slavery on the sugar islands was particularly harsh. Planters needed at least 20 pounds of cane to make 1 pound of sugar. Cane that had been cut needed to be milled before it could be sold and the milling had to take place less than 24 hours after cutting to prevent fermentation. The planters had almost unlimited authority over their slaves according to the laws of the islands. The method of planting was extremely labor intensive. Crops required 18 months to come to harvest. Planting therefore was done during the rainy months (May – December) and harvest came sometime during the dry season (January – May). The plants had to be cut, hoed, planted, dunged, weeded and thinned. Digging 5” to 6” holes for the young plants was followed by animal dung that had to be carried to the fields, usually by women, in large dung baskets. Then came the activities of harvest – cutting, hauling, boiling, and milling. Once the cycle of one harvest was finished there was just enough time to prepare for the next. A sugar plantation was a “factory set in a field” where human labor was expendable and the only ones who benefited were the plantation owners.

Life on a slave gang was especially cruel. Gangs worked from dawn to dark, six days a week, and more than 300 days a year. On Sundays, when they usually did not work, they were expected to tend to their own gardens. When it came time to mill and boil down the sugar, slaves worked an average of 16 to 18 hours a day. Estate owners provided little in the way of clothing or food. Some provided new clothes for their slaves only once a year – others, not even that. Travelers to the islands as late as the 1800s described men and women working naked or nearly naked, in both the fields and the factories. House servants or town slaves wore cloths but often went barefoot. Most slaves lived in flimsy huts not far from the fields and close to the mill.

#### THE ISLANDS AS A KILLING MACHINE

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 129

The enormous number of slaves the plantations required was indicative of the harshness of the conditions. Death rates were high and the need to replace workers was an ongoing dilemma. West Africans have relatively little tolerance for cold. Arriving already ill from the voyage over, subjected to continuous manual labor, and kept in a state of malnourishment, their odds of survival were very slim indeed. What remains a mystery is the relatively low birth rate among African slave women. Theories put forth as reasons for their inability or unwillingness to conceive include poor diet, breast-feeding that increases the time of infertility, decrease in the number of women slaves who survived, and lack of opportunity. None of these reasons seems to by itself explain why so many slaves had to be shipped to the New World rather than were born in it. Another reason, which may be closer to the truth, was the slave women's lack of desire to bring a child into such a cruel and short-lived existence as a slave on one of the sugar islands.<sup>17</sup>

## ***V. The Haitian Occupation***

### DISAPPEARING GLORY

The island of Hispaniola enjoyed enormous but short-lived glory. The planting site of Spanish civilization in the New World, the place of the first European city, first university, and first monastery, the island was also the springboard for all initial Spanish colonization. Further Spanish conquests, Jamaica (1509); Cuba (1511); Puerto Rico (1512) and eventually Mexico (1519) were all organized and executed from Hispaniola. In Santo Domingo the *audiencia real*<sup>18</sup> sat. But the "glory days" of Columbus's paradise lasted only 40 years.

With each discovery of the size and treasure of Americas, Hispaniola's importance diminished precipitously. Bureaucracy increasingly dominated Hispaniola's local economy. The Crown's policy forbidding its colonies to trade with other European nations further restricted any possibility of economic breakthrough. As Mexico acquired the title of Spain's "treasure house" in the New World, Hispaniola slipped into oblivion. Heavily taxed, constantly regulated and yet subject to unreliable supplies, many of the colonists - particularly those who had been born on the island - resented the royal stranglehold on trade and the domination of Spanish functionaries, the *peninsulares*<sup>19</sup>. Spain's lack of interest in the welfare of the island contributed to a steep decline in its population and development. By 1570, Hispaniola was the "backwaters" of Spain's colonial holdings with fewer than 5,000 people.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 141 The harsh treatment of African slaves in the Caribbean is highlighted by the rapid and sustained increase of the North American slave population. "In 1825, both the United States and the islands had an African population of about 2 million. But slave traders had carried (through 1810) about 3,500,000 slaves to the islands and only some 375,000 to British North America."

<sup>18</sup> *Audiencia Real* - a type of a supreme court established in the New World; the *audiencia real* handled judicial appeals and administrative matters for the Spanish Crown

<sup>19</sup> *The Dominican Republic and Haiti*, p.35

Spain's "refocus" and weakness in the Caribbean encouraged other colonial powers to move in. Britain promptly seized Jamaica, St. Kitts, Barbados, and Antigua, Holland several islands in the Lesser Antilles, and the French took a prominent interest in Hispaniola itself. Legally, these islands all belonged to Spain, but she did little to prevent their loss.

#### THE BIRTH OF HAITI

With Spain unwilling or unable to protect her interests in the Caribbean, the French quickly moved in and seized the northwestern part of Hispaniola and made it a *de facto* French colony called Saint Domingue. By 1664, it had been incorporated into the French charter.<sup>20</sup>

Santo Domingue (later named Haiti) experienced the most spectacular rise of any 18<sup>th</sup>-century colony. Historian C.L.R. James wrote of Haiti, "the most prosperous colony the world had ever known; to the casual eye the most flourishing and prosperous possession on the face of the globe." Money, wealthy planters, and African slaves poured into the new colony. Over 100,000 acres of land was irrigated in the 1740s, filled with lucrative crops of indigo, cocoa, coffee, cotton, and, of course, sugar.

If the paradigm the Spanish imposed upon the island was bad, the French paradigm was pure evil. Huge, grotesque social extremes flourished. The *grands blancs* (the "great whites") lived in decadent opulence in the urban areas of Port-au-Prince, Cap Francais, and Jacmel, the poor whites ("petites blancs") and the mulattos made up the oppressed middle class, while the black slaves from West Africa fueled the economy working the field and occupied the bottom rung of society. Each group hated and feared the others. It was a recipe for gross profit for the privileged white planters and for social disaster.

When news of the French Revolution filtered back to Saint Domingue, each sector of society interpreted these distant events according to its own interests.<sup>21</sup> A chaotic situation arose throughout all of Saint Domingue and a French expeditionary force of 6,000 arrived in September 1792. Both Spain and Britain watched the events with great interest. Spain assembled troops on the border ready to reclaim their lost territory.

The slaves' chief leader was Toussaint L'Ouverture who through cunning and an innate instinct for strategy managed to secure the abolition of slavery and positioned the black majority in the place of power. By 1800 Toussaint was the master of Saint Domingue – though nominally a French colony, in reality it was an independent country. He made trade agreements with the United States, encouraged investment in education with new taxes, and directed the freed slaves to return to the plantations as free laborers. He even reached out to the white planters to help him rebuild the nation.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p 38

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 42

However, Napoleon Bonaparte was not happy with the situation in his most valuable colony. He would accept no challenge from those he called “gilded Africans”. Soon he would send an imposing force of 22,000 troops to the island with the objective of deposing Toussaint and restoring French rule. In June 1802, Toussaint was captured and shipped back to France. Before leaving he wrote, “In overthrowing me you have cut down only the trunk of the tree of liberty. It will spring up again by the roots for they are numerous and deep.” Napoleon’s brother-in-law, General Victor Emmanuel Leclerc, said, “It is not enough to have taken away Toussaint, there are 2,000 leaders to be taken away.” Soon fighting broke out with disastrous results for the French. Led by Jean-Jacques Dessalines the black troops exacted 80% casualties against the French and cruelly destroyed white estates across the breadth of the island. On January 1, 1804, General Dessalines declared the island’s independence, restoring the Taíno-derived name meaning “land of high mountains”<sup>22</sup> (Haiti).

Again, after the celebrations, what paradigm of leadership and governance did Dessalines establish? Within months he declared himself emperor and issued orders to kill every remaining white person and some mulattos. Haiti was to be a totally black nation. His was a bloodthirsty reign that came to an end within two years when he was shot dead by mutinous mulatto officers. Meanwhile, the old colonial plantations system fell into ruins, and Haiti rapidly became a nation of small farmers.

#### THE HAITIAN INVASION AND OCCUPATION

Events on the Haitian side of the island caught world attention during the late 1700s and early 1800s. Matters on the Spanish side, what was then called Santo Domingo, were quite the contrary. Spain’s first colony in the New World suffered nearly 100 years of neglect and abandonment. Poverty ridden, without industry or any significant commerce, the Spanish side, became a rural nation of independent peasants and small farmers. In 1789, the Spanish side of Hispaniola had a population of 125, 000. By 1819, the census showed that only 63,000 inhabitants remained. The Spanish estates had been broken up and most of the white population had returned to Spain.

In 1821, the inhabitants of Santo Domingo followed the lead of their counterparts on the mainland and declared independence from Spain. Choosing the name, *La Republica Dominicana* (the Dominican Republic), the early patriots attempted to set-up an independent government for the eastern two-thirds of the island. Their efforts were very short-lived.

Within a matter of weeks, Haitian columns under Jean-Pierre Boyer (president of Haiti, 1818-1843) again overran the entire island.<sup>23</sup> The Haitians occupied the

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 44

<sup>23</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 29, p. 745, ed. 1995*

Dominican Republic under the dictatorship of Boyer for 22 years. Dominican historians always portray this period as the cruelest and most oppressive chapter in the nation's history. Haitians held all the high offices of the land, closed universities and monasteries, severed the church's ties with Rome, and did all that was possible to destroy Hispanic traditions and the traditional ruling class. However, Boyer's government did outlaw slavery and proved itself to be financially efficient.

This time of occupation and two subsequent invasions by Haiti in 1849 and 1853 created an enmity between the two island nations that has endured and intensified over 150 years.

## ***VI. The Age of Dictators***

### THE PARADIGM CONTINUES

Juan Pedro Duarte is known as the father of Dominican independence. It is of note that the Dominicans won their independence, not from Spain, but from Haiti. In 1831, Duarte and others formed a secret society aimed at overthrowing Boyer's oppressive regime. After many years of struggle and armed conflict, Haiti pulled out its troops from Dominican soil in 1844. Despite his successful efforts in expelling the Haitians, Duarte was soon exiled to Europe and the young nation found itself completely unprepared for independent rule. What followed Dominican independence in 1844 was a series of Dominican dictatorships and periods of chaos that would last until 1966 – a period of 122 years!

After gaining independence, the Dominican Republic adopted the Napoleonic French tradition of strong central authority and rule from the top down.<sup>24</sup> Dominican "presidents" used the government and its resources only to perpetuate themselves in power and for their own personal enrichment. The three chief figures of the latter part of the 1800s were Pedro Santana, Buenaventura Báez, and Ulises Heureaux – all three dictators who left little lasting benefit for the people of the Dominican Republic. The situation became so unstable that in 1912 even the archbishop, Adolfo Nouel, ruled the country in an attempt to restore order.

### UNITED STATES AND OCCUPATION

In the early 1900s, the United State replaced Europe as the major player in the Caribbean. As early as 1821, through the Monroe Doctrine, the U.S. staked out its claim as protector of freedom and democracy in the region. Now, spurred by the construction of the Panama Canal and its increasing economic interests, the United States took an active role in the direction and formation of national life among the Caribbean islands. Fearing an intervention from Europe into the power vacuum on the island that could threaten U.S. interests in the Panama Canal, in 1916, the United States assumed complete control of Dominican affairs and occupied the country.

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<sup>24</sup> *A Brief History of the Caribbean*, p.258

The U.S. occupation (1916-24) was in many ways a great blessing for the Dominicans. Law and order was established, democratic ideas were sowed, new roads, schools, and sanitation facilities were built. American administrators reorganized the national finances, created schools, and introduced public health systems.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps their most enduring contribution was baseball – now the national sport and national pastime. However, many Dominicans resented the intervention of the Americans and cited numerous abuses of privilege and power. The U.S. Marine Corps established a modern, unified military academy that was later used as the springboard for future military dictatorships.

In 1924 a U.S. supervised election put Horacio Vásquez into power as president. His rule eventually proved incompetent and corrupt, and the stock market crash of 1929-30 undermined the Dominican economy.<sup>26</sup> Once again, a power vacuum was created that was quickly filled by one of the Dominican's premier strongmen (*caudillos*) – Rafael Trujillo.

#### DICTATORSHIP OF TRUJILLO

Trujillo took power in the midst of a national crisis. A hurricane in 1930 destroyed most of the capital, Santo Domingo. The worldwide depression hit the Dominican Republic hard as unemployment skyrocketed and paralyzed efforts to rebuild after the storm. In full control of the military and political infrastructures of the nation, Trujillo welded extraordinary power that continued until his assassination in 1961. As much a thug as a fascist, Trujillo had to own everything he touched and demanded a treatment from his fellow-citizens that could only be compared to worship.

During his reign he eliminated all political enemies and severely limited freedom of expression in every form. Three of the Dominican's greatest modern heroes are *Las Tres Hermanas Mirabal* (the Three Mirabal Sisters). They were killed in a rigged automobile accident in 1960 while returning from visiting their husbands in prison in Puerto Plata. One of the Dominican's most popular and influential authors, Julia Alvarez, who today lives in Vermont, wrote a prized work of fiction based upon the historical account of the sisters, entitled "In the Time of the Butterflies". (SEE APPENDIX III) Modern historians consider Trujillo's regime of 30 years to be the most totalitarian of all.

Without a democratic model to which to compare his government, most Dominicans supported Trujillo and appreciated his accomplishments. The overall economy grew, foreign debts disappeared, the currency stabilized, the middle class expanded, and a public education system was established under his leadership. His end came when he tried to extend his murderous and dictatorial ways beyond the borders of his own nation. In 1960, Trujillo sprung a plot to assassinate the president of Venezuela. The Organization of American States banned weapon sales to the country, the U.S. Congress cut price supports for

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p. 255

<sup>26</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 29, p. 745, ed. 1995*

Dominican sugar, and rumors of unrest kept away tourists.<sup>27</sup> When his rule came to an end upon his own assassination, he had amassed a personal fortune of more than \$500 million U.S. dollars and owned companies controlling 60% of the nation's assets.

#### BALAGUER AND BOSCH

Trujillo's successor as *caudillo* (dictator or strongman) was Joaquin Balaguer. He, along with his arch nemesis, Juan Bosch, were to dominate the politics of the Dominican Republic for the remainder of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. One or the other was to be president of the country over the next 35 years. Following the pattern established over centuries of dictatorial rule, Balaguer ruled with an iron fist. "I am the state" was his guiding principle as he controlled upwards of half the national budget and fired cabinet members and elected officials at will. In return for votes, Balaguer and his political part handed out favors and distributed national wealth and resources. Homes for votes, jobs for votes, land for votes; the deal was straightforward.<sup>28</sup> Despite blindness and old age, Balaguer ran in the election of 2000 at the age of 93, coming in third. His politics and party (el Partido Reformista Social Cristiano – the Social Christian Reformist Party) remains one of the greatest influences in the Dominican political scene today. Balaguer died in 2002.

### ***VII. Today's Dominican Republic***

#### BLACK IS NOT BLACK IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The racial, social, and cultural identity of today's Dominican may be difficult for the average North American to understand. By all appearances and reason, most Dominicans are a mix of Spanish and African blood. The last "pure" Amerindian probably disappeared as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and yet, most Dominicans call themselves *indios* (Indian). On the national ID cards there are four different classes of Indians – all based on skin color: *osuro* (dark), *quemado* (burnt), *canelo* (cinnamon), *lavado* (washed). It is impossible to understand the importance race plays in the national identity without taking into account the Dominican Republic's neighbor to the west – Haiti. Dominicans express both contempt and fear of their more numerous Haitian neighbors. Geographically divided by only a mountain range, the two peoples who share the island of Hispaniola, are more importantly divided by culture, language, religion, and to a lesser extent, economics.

To be black is to be everything a Dominican does not consider himself to be or wants to be because to be black is to be Haitian. Although the vast majority of Dominicans have at least one ancestor of African descent, and many are quite obviously black, they look elsewhere for their identity. In the Dominican Republic, "good" hair is straight hair, "normal" features are European ones. Women spend hours straightening their hair and trying to lighten their skin, since the country's

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<sup>27</sup> *A Brief History of the Caribbean*, p.257

<sup>28</sup> *The Dominican Republic and Haiti*, p. 59

popular culture values non-African looks and promotes an image of light-skinned beauty.<sup>29</sup>

#### TREATMENT OF THE HAITIANS

The treatment of Haitians living and working inside the borders of the Dominican Republic is rough at best. The worst example of Dominican fear and hatred of Haitians was Trujillo's massacre of 15,000 Haitian migrant workers in 1937. Though murder and massacre are no longer evident, resentment and injustice continues. Many Haitians live in run down barracks without adequate sanitation making only \$5 a day for backbreaking work. They do it because back home in Haiti they face starvation and even worse conditions.

The average per capita income in the Republic is around US\$1600 per year. However, this is not an accurate reflection of the grinding poverty that most Dominicans experience day-to-day. The top 10 percent of the population control 40 percent of the income; leaving the bottom 10 percent with only 2 percent of the wealth. Perhaps a more accurate figure of average wage earning power would be half the official figure (that is, US\$800). This is still better than the average wage in Haiti that does not exceed US\$500!

#### A NATION OF MIGRANTS

Without the chance for social mobility and lacking opportunities for education<sup>30</sup>, many modern Dominicans seek to migrate to the United States – particularly New York City – home to over a million Dominicans. Called *dominicanyorks* by their compatriots, the Dominicans living in the United States contribute largely to the survival of Dominican families by sending an estimated US\$1.5 billion home each year.

The average Dominican has a love/hate relationship with the United States. Mindful and resentful of the U.S. occupations (once in 1916-24, and again in the 1960s), nonetheless, there is much in his mind to admire in U.S. culture and opportunity. Leonel Fernandez, who was elected president in 1998, even ran on the platform of wanting to turn the Republic into a "little New York". The song *Visa para un Sueno* (Visa for a Dream) by *merengue* singer Juan Luis Guerra expresses the fears and yearning felt by many Dominicans as they consider the hope of living in the United States with the separation from family in the Republic.

#### MODERN POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

During the 1980s, many of the important factors that contribute to a truly democratic society began to emerge in the Republic. An expanding middle class, strong political parties, interest groups, and literacy, all bring hope to what would otherwise be a very dismal outlook.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p. 81

<sup>30</sup> Education is in short supply, particularly in rural areas where schools are usually overcrowded, and under-equipped. A large segment of the population doesn't complete the primary grades and it is estimated that over a quarter of the adult population cannot read or write.

Balaguer continued the pattern he inherited from dictator Trujillo's regime of state owned companies and industry. The sugar, electrical, banking, and insurance industries remained under the control of the federal government. Such a large and corrupt government continued to serve as a magnet for ambitious and well-educated Dominicans. Recent calls for privatization has some impetus for change. Perhaps reform in this area will be enough to transform at least some of what has been a generational paradigm of central control exercised mainly for personal aggrandizement.

Recent national events have not offered much consolation. In 2003, the country was rocked by a mammoth banking scandal that led to the collapse of one of the nation's largest banks. Confidence in the government's handling of the economy also fell to new lows. After Hipólito Mejía's election as president, a dramatic increase in public sector jobs sharply increased the national debt. Annual inflation rose 25 percent in 2003 and consumer spending fell as the poor got even poorer.

#### PLANTATION AND VACATION

The economy of the Dominican Republic has undergone a revolution since the mid 1960s. Once based almost entirely on sugar exportation, the economy has diversified to include a booming cigar industry, some manufacturing, and most importantly, tourism.

By far the biggest generator of new wealth in the Republic since the 1980s has been the tourist industry. Over 2 ½ million people visit the Dominican each year. Huge multinational chains, western style-resorts, and smaller independent hotels contribute to provide over 150,000 jobs. Tourism is approaching annual revenue of US\$3 billion a year. Most of the tourism is central around Puerto Plata and what is today called the "Amber Coast".

More controversial, but only slightly less profitable for the nation are the new "industrial free zones" – manufacturing plants set up to assemble goods for markets in the United States. Since the 1970s Dominican governments have encouraged foreign companies to establish factories that provide cheap labor and tax revenue. Most of the new manufacturing is located in the Cibao Valley. Total free zone exports exceed US\$4 billion a year. Nevertheless, competition should become stiffer after the lifting of quotas in 2005.

#### BASEBALL – THE NATIONAL SPORT

No study of the national life of the Dominican Republic would be complete without a reference to baseball. While most of Latin America is enraptured with *fútbol* (soccer), the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Venezuela produce some of the greatest stars of the game anywhere. Names such as, Valdimir Guerrero, Pedro Martinez, Manny Ramirez, and, of course, Sammy Sosa are the greatest examples of the potential resident within Dominican people, according to their national psyche. Beginning from the toddler years, Dominican boys learn to play baseball using old milk cartons for gloves, taped oranges for balls, and cane reeds for bats. Almost all Dominicans choose a favorite team among the six professional teams that compete on the island: the Tigres del Licey (team color, blue), the Leones del

Escogido (red), both in Santo Domingo, the Aguilas Cibaenas (yellow) in Santiago, the Estrellas Orientales (green) in San Pedro de Macorís, Gigantes del Cibao (brown) in San Francisco de Macorís, and the Azucareros del Este (purple) in La Romana. Their season begins in October right after the Major Leagues conclude their season in the United States. Other famous Dominican players include Hall of Famer Juan Marischal and the Alou brothers.

### ***VIII. The Amber Coast***

Since our mission is to the area of the Republic that is today called the “Amber Coast”, I thought it valuable to include specific information about this area. Much of what has so far been covered applies to the whole country, but there are features peculiar to this region that are worth a closer look.

#### AMBER HUNTING

Rich in history and beginning place of Spanish civilization in the New World, the northern coast of the Dominican Republic is rich in another way. *Ambar dominicano* (Dominican amber) is among the best most desirable in the world.<sup>31</sup> Although not as well known as the amber from the Baltics, experts praise it for its translucence and wide variety of color. Some of the unusual shades of amber found there are blue, green, red, and a light beige color, referred to as cognac. Collectors around the world put the highest value on the rare blue amber of volcanic origin and on pieces containing animal fossil inclusions.<sup>32</sup>

#### PUERTO PLATA

Another national “treasure” of the northern coast is the new booming tourist industry. Puerto Plata (Silver Port), is the largest city and focal point of the north. Two international festivals are held there each year – *Carnival* (February and March) and the *Merengue* Festival in October. The Museum of Dominican Amber and the Fort of San Felipe both attract tourist to the city. There is a spectacular view of Puerto Plata and the bay that is offered from *Pico Isabel de Torres* (Isabelle of Towers Summit). It can only be reached by cable car, but is well worth the time and expense involved.

#### SOSUA

The north coast boasts some of the best beaches in the Caribbean. Sosúa, about 10 miles down the road from Puerto Plata, is a magnet for those looking to enjoy the sun. A sleepy fishing village for most of its history, Sosúa awakened in the 1980s to the prospect of greater gain. It garnered a reputation as the center of Dominican prostitution until authorities realized that there was a better way to attract visitors to the country. Today, many of the brothels have been converted into small hotels used by family tourists from Europe and North America. Many multinational resort chains line the coast along with restaurants, bars, and nightclubs.

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<sup>31</sup> *Dominican Republic and Haiti*, p. 207

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215

Sosúa is also known for the *Sinagoga de la Comunidad Judía de Sosúa* (Synagogue of the Jewish Community of Sosúa). Though no longer a meeting place for worship, the synagogue is a reminder of the holocaust. President Trujillo invited Jews escaping Hitler's Nazi Germany to the Dominican Republic during the late 1930s. They settled in Sosúa, became dairy farmers and venders of dairy products. Almost all the Jews left the country in the 1960s after the assassination of Trujillo, but funding for the synagogue and museum next door is sufficient to keep the doors open as a place of interest.

#### CABARETE – THE WINDSURFING CAPITAL

A 10 to 15 minute drive east from Sosúa brings you to Cabarete, the windsurfing capital of the Caribbean. The trade winds that blow against the northern shores create ideal conditions for windsurfing aficionados. Cabarete hosts the Cabarete Race Week in June and on several occasions the town has been selected to host the World Cup of Windsurfing by the Professional Windsurfers Association.

### ***IX. The Importance of a New Paradigm***

#### THE NEED FOR A NEW PARADIGM

The reason we have concentrated so much of our study on the history of the Dominican Republic is to drive home the point of paradigm. We are not just what we are because of free will decisions, present opportunities, and innate abilities. Each one of us is to some degree a product of the past – a fruit of past generations' decisions, actions, and thought. That fruit can be bad or good or morally neutral – but it does play a major role in who we are and where we are today. To use an example, each generation comes along to build its house so to speak. Yet, the only ground upon which it can build is that which has been left it by the succeeding generation. I may have grand designs and be gifted as a builder, but if sand is the only material I have upon which to build – my construction will not be lasting, neither will it be large. Essentially this is the effect of paradigm. Once a pattern has been accepted and established over long periods of time, it becomes the foundation for all subsequent efforts, whether we choose that pattern or not.

Many American Christians recoil at the thought of Christians in the Third World paying what amounts to bribes or working “under the table” at jobs in the black market. Rightfully so they decry such as “unworthy of the gospel” and “not an example” of light and righteousness. However, what those same Christians fail to realize because of the blessing of living in a country with a right foundation, is that most of those Third World Christians have only one other alternative – starvation! The assumption that there are enough jobs for everyone is simply not true in many of the world's poorer nations. And why is that? Because of the thinking, the actions, and the decisions of their parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and so on. They have been given a foundation, a paradigm, if you will, that does not work and brings cursing rather than blessing. Under such circumstances, one believes for God's best, but understands that God has only what is available to work with until there is a new paradigm upon which to build.

#### 500 YEARS BUILDING A WRONG FOUNDATION

In light of our study, is it any wonder that the name of Columbus is a curse on the island of Hispaniola?<sup>33</sup> While other Latin American countries honor the Great Explorer, have erected statues and monuments to him and his achievements, and speak kindly of their Spanish ancestry, the Dominican Republic takes a different view. The Dominicans look back upon their Amerindian heritage – though plucked up for sure – with fondness and admiration, while loathing the day of the arrival of Spain into the New World.

However, not all of the blame falls upon Columbus or those who immediately followed him. The paradigms of slavery, dictatorship, military invasion and occupation have built upon that original foundation. Each generation has built something unworthy and detrimental, one after another, until the only practical hope that Dominicans entertain of a better material life is found outside of their borders – New York City or a career in Major League baseball. Is it any wonder that Sammy Sosa, Manny Ramirez or Alex Rodriguez are the only true heroes that Dominican youth think they can ever have?

#### DISCIPLING NATIONS

When Jesus gave the apostles His Great Commission He was very clear as to what their objectives were. They were first of all to “go” – He was calling them to leave the familiar, to leave a fixed place of ministry, and to march on to other peoples, cultures, and lands. Secondly, they were to “disciple nations”. Though the Greek in the sentence could be translated in different ways, we know from Psalm 2 that Christ had been promised the nations by His Heavenly Father and now had every intention of claiming that promise. He wanted nations to be taken up for the Glory of God and for the nations themselves to show forth His praises. It is no accident that the Early Church “inherited” the Old Roman Empire and became its custodian. Given opportunity to “disciple nations” is a great privilege of His church. Lastly, they were to baptize their converts as disciples of Christ and to continue teaching them His ways and commandments.

There can be no denying that Spain’s Catholic Church did a miserable job of discipling nations, particularly on Hispaniola. What was a great privilege and opportunity rapidly turned into a mockery of all that Christ intended. Perhaps nowhere else in history is there such a witness to Christian failure. And, four hundred years later, the mistake remains, having been built upon by many generations.

Darrow Miller in his book, *Discipling Nations* (our textbook for this course), states that everyone has a worldview.<sup>34</sup> The worldview we have is in large degree handed off to us from others. We may “seed pick” our personal philosophy and synthesize it into what may seem to us to be a unique blend, but in reality no one is original. The thoughts that humanity deems worthy of holding are shared

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<sup>33</sup> “Fukú” – a local word meaning a “curse”

<sup>34</sup> *Discipling Nations*, Darrow L. Miller, 1998, p. 74

thoughts – not individually held thoughts. And the worldview of a people or a nation is critical to their corporate destiny. Until there is a new paradigm that takes root, grows, and produces new fruit – the old one will perpetuate itself forever.

#### ESTABLISHING A NEW PARADIGM

It is no accident that our mission takes us to the very shores where Columbus and the first explorers landed. On those beaches and the lands that lie just inland from there, the first foundation was laid for ten generations of Dominicans. We have opportunity to help lay a new foundation for a new generation.

The Dominican Republic remains one of the least evangelized countries of the Caribbean, and perhaps of the whole of Latin America. Evangelical growth came relatively late, but took off in the 1970s and continued through the '90s as Evangelicals strove to multiply churches.<sup>35</sup> The majority of Dominicans are Catholic in affiliation, but occultism remains strong and is wide spread. As a result, it's hard to establish new believers in the churches. Approximately, 3,200 congregations exist in the Republic, many of them small and struggling. There are over 4,000 villages that are without any evangelical witness at all. The most receptive group in the Republic seems to be the Haitian immigrants or those who are descendants of Haitian immigrants. Despised by the Dominicans, and subject to long days of hard manual labor in the sugar cane fields, many of their congregations have multiplied rapidly throughout the '90s.

#### THE MINISTRY OF “NEW MISSIONS”

**New Missions**, first established many years ago in Haiti by George Di Tellis, and today ministering in the Republic, offers genuine hope to future generations of Dominicans. While **New Missions** offers various medical and humanitarian services, its focus is on the winning, training, and educating of Dominican children for God's glory through its school ministry. In true apostolic obedience they seek to “make disciples of all nations” and to “teach them to observe all things” He has commanded. By ministering in the school we make ourselves active participants in the work of God to change a nation!

#### KEYS TO PARADIGM SHIFT

Though only a work of God's Spirit can permanently change a paradigm, there are ways through which we can partner with Him. The following are four keys to effective ministry as a short-term missionary in the Dominican Republic:

1. Go to the Dominican Republic with a self-sacrificial attitude and spirit. Foreigners and compatriots alike have historically used every advantage given them to abuse and oppress people – you must be different! Different – not just in a mediocre or lukewarm fashion, but in a radical, genuine way. Make it your business to show people the sacrificial love of Christ in the small opportunities that arise. Don't patronize people, but show them your sincere desire to help and serve.

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<sup>35</sup> *Operation World*, Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk, p. 228

2. Model a genuine interest in the Dominican Republic and its people. One of the concerns among Dominican church leaders is the fact that many of its most promising leaders seek greener pastures in New York or neighboring Puerto Rico. It is hard to cast blame given the extensive history the island has of poverty and oppression. However, if you can do something during your mission time to express true interest in the future of the nation, you may have given someone hope that things can be different.
3. Under gird all that is effectively working for a brighter future for the Dominicans. Make it your aim to strengthen the ministry and hands of ***New Missions***. Allow them to place you where you can do the most good, then look for ways to make impact. We want to leave ***New Missions*** in a better way when we leave than how it was before we came.
4. Pray for the Dominican Republic as you go about your ministry there. Prayer has enormous power for change. Intercession reaches where direct action may be ineffective and weak. Pray for every child in the school, for every teacher on the campus, for the directors of ***New Missions***, and for those Dominicans whom God brings across your path. If your labor is your only contribution to God's work on the island, you will have robbed yourself and the Dominican people of the most important part of why you are being sent.

#### IS A NEW PARADIGM POSSIBLE?

One has only to look at the Word of God and its effect upon human history to know that change for God's glory is always possible! It was not that long ago that Africa was still the "dark continent" and China was behind the impenetrable "bamboo curtain". Today, both of those places are ablaze with revival and thousand-year strongholds are falling! People are awakening to the light of the gospel, changing their worldviews, entering God's Kingdom, and setting down new paradigms for future generations. We have hope in God's goodness and promises as our anchor for a brighter future in the Dominican Republic as well.