Remaking the Catholic Church in Santo Domingo

Haitian State Reform and Its Consequences

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Abstract

In 1824, the Haitian government passed a series of laws that secularized the Catholic Church's lands in Santo Domingo and placed this religious institution under state control. Using correspondences, pamphlets, and petitions, this article argues that Haitian reforms of the Church in Santo Domingo created a new power dynamic that incorporated local communities with these secular and religious institutions. In doing so, this literature brings together two literatures that rarely speak to one another: the impact of the Haitian Unification on the Church in Santo Domingo and Haitian diplomatic negotiations over sovereignty in the Atlantic world. This article will discuss how different relationships between Church and state in Santo Domingo and Haiti resulted in conflict after Haiti's annexation in 1822. Next, it will focus on the clerics' responses to Haitian rule that includes the consequences of the 1824 secularization law. Finally, it will examine the impact of Haitian reforms on local communities particularly their relationships with their priests.

Keywords

Catholic Church – clergy – parishioners – reform – Haitian Unification – Santo Domingo

On August 14, 1827, a group of Dominicans from the town of Moca in the northern part of Santo Domingo petitioned Archbishop Pedro Valera y Jiménez for a new priest.¹ The petitioners argued for the need of a priest to perform sacra-

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ments such as communion and penance, citing the long distance between Moca and the cities of Santiago de los Caballeros and La Vega.² The Dominicans asked for Gabriel Sánchez Cabrera, a cleric with whom they were familiar.³ Their request and familiarity with Sánchez Cabrera suggest that he may have spent time previously in Moca. The Mocanos noted that if Sánchez Cabrera would be their priest they would not “work harder than his efforts for the Holy Church.”⁴ The comments of the Dominicans illustrated the connection they had to Sánchez Cabrera which they used in their argument for his appointment.

Scholars have demonstrated that the Haitian reforms of the Church alienated the secular and religious elites but they have paid less attention to the influence of the laws on the perspectives of the clergy and laity. The Dominican literature presents Haitian rule as negatively affecting the Church and made it a point of contention that contributed to Santo Domingo's independence in 1844.⁵ Despite the Church's weakened financial base, Dominican parishioners continued to reach out to the religious institution in matters concerning local practices, customs, and beliefs.⁶ Although the lack of priests did hinder

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- 2 Town of Our Lady of Rosario of Moca's Residents to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Moca, August 14, 1827, Archivo Historico del Arzobispado de Santo Domingo-Vicaria del Clero (hereafter AHASD-Vicaria del Clero), bookcase 1, shelf 81, box 4, no. 10. Here and elsewhere, all translations are the author's own.
- 3 Town of Our Lady of Rosario of Moca's Residents to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Moca, August 14, 1827, AHASD-Vicaria del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 81, box 4, no. 10. *Vicarios* or assistant pastors spent up to a year or less in an area before they moved on. Until they were to receive promotions from authorities in the cathedral city, they would continue in their position (Taylor 1996:118).
- 4 Town of Our Lady of Rosario of Moca's Residents to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Moca, 14 August 1827, AHASD-Vicaria del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 81, box 4, no. 10.
- 5 For studies on the Church in Santo Domingo, see Nouel 1979 and Perez Memon 1984. For those examining the impact of Church relations on Dominican nationality and independence, see Gabriel García 2016 and Martinez-Fernandez 1995.
- 6 For examples of popular beliefs in the Dominican Republic, see Guerrero Cano 1989. For case studies in other places, see Taylor 1996 and Van Young 2001.

parishioner worship, Dominicans' use of the Haitian State to intercede against Church abuses challenges the notion of the interactions between both sides of the island as being negative.⁷ This article complements larger political histories of Church and State relations by highlighting the effects on the clergy and laity on the island of Hispaniola. Moreover, it challenges the notion that Haitian reforms undermined the State's rule and suggests that the changes implemented by the State served more to galvanize negative accounts to disrupt the Republic's rule.

A focus on the entanglement of President Boyer with the Catholic clergy in Santo Domingo reveals an assertion of Haitian sovereignty during an important part of State formation. Reevaluations of nineteenth-century Haitian historiography have pushed scholars to question the older interpretations of dependency and decline in Haiti after the Revolution (Dubois 2012, 2014; Dupuy 2019; and Sepinwall 2013). The different diplomatic channels that the Haitian State took advantage of helped its leaders to undermine the attempts of France to isolate its former colony (Gaffield 2015:7–8, 10–11). The existence of Haiti challenged how nations perceived sovereignty over the course of the nineteenth century (Salt 2019:13–18). Julia Gaffield's work on Haiti's negotiations with the Church offers an example of how the Haitian Republic continued to assert its authority and place among the other nations despite the growing racialization of international law and financial indemnity to France working to undermine its attempts (Gaffield 2020:841–44, 847–50). An analysis of events between the Church on domestic soil closer to home illustrates the importance of the stakes for Boyer and the Haitian State in consolidating its authority in Santo Domingo.

The petitions of the Mocanos and other parishioners along with correspondences between clerical officials and secular priests demonstrate the consequences of the changing affiliation between the Haitian State and Church within Santo Domingo. Among the priests found throughout Latin America were the secular clergy known as the *vicarios*. The Spanish Crown appointed these assistant pastors as parish priests to meet the growing need of understaffed parishes in the Americas. Because conditions kept *vicarios* within a specific parish, their observations serve as a lens to analyze the impact of Haitian reforms on the Dominican clergy and Church (Taylor 1996:79–80, 118–19). I understand the relationship between the Church and State in Santo Domingo to fall under three different categories: one of integration between the secular and religious powers; one of domination where the Church relies on the State

7 Eller 2011, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2019; Lora Hugi 2012, 2016; Nessler 2016; Ulrickson 2018, 2019; Walker 2018, 2019; and Yingling 2015, 2016.

to carry out its functions; and one of rupture where the Vatican and State have no formal diplomatic relationship (Betances 2007:19–22).

An examination of the impact of the conflict of jurisdiction on the Dominican clergy and parishioners reveals that the Haitian reforms were not entirely negative. This article first asks how did the earlier experiences of the relationship between the Church and State in Santo Domingo and Haiti shape the responses of Valera y Jiménez and Boyer? Next, how did the relationship between the Church and State change under Haitian rule from what it had been during the Spanish regime? Finally, how did the reforms passed under the law of 1824 affect the relationship between Dominican parishioners, priests, and the Church? I argue that the Haitian State laws created a new power dynamic between the Church and government where parishioners could appeal to either secular or spiritual power for their religious needs.

1 Loyal to the President or Pope

A close alliance between the Spanish Crown and Church characterized the colonial project of Spain in the Americas. Beginning in 1508, the Pope granted the Spanish Crown the right to appoint all bishops and clergy known as the *Patronato Real* (Williamson 2009:63, 94). Spanish monarchs Isabel and Fernando had already allied themselves closely with the Church during the Reconquista to centralize their power, and this patronage further added to their influence. With the ability to appoint their ecclesiastical officials, the Spanish Crown had another branch of government that ran parallel to the secular administration (Williamson 2009:94). For example, the Spanish appointed clerics onto councils and for inspections (Lockhart & Schwartz 1983:13). By the time the Spanish lost their colonies in the Americas, the Church would not extend this privilege to the presidents of these new nations even though they claimed this act of patronage as a right (Williamson 2009:242).

The early Haitian leaders like their Latin American counterparts balanced asserting their rights to control the Church while facing resistance from the Vatican. Beginning in 1806, the Haitian State affirmed itself as a Catholic country and its relationship with the Vatican (Gaffield 2020:850). But this affirmation was at the expense of tolerating all Protestant sects, separating Church and State, and making marriage a civil matter that included divorce. The authority of the President expanded under Boyer who could appoint priests to different parishes while limiting them to performing certain sacraments such as baptism, marriage, and funeral rights. Protestantism and freemasonry competed with Catholicism for a strong religious and spiritual presence. Boyer himself

flirted with Protestantism. It was under this context that the Vatican began a series of attempts through diplomatic channels to negotiate with the Haitian government in 1820 but with little success (Greene 1993:80–86; Poole 2005:642–44).

While this was occurring in Haiti, the unification of rival Haitian states in the north and south under Boyer presented an opportunity for Archbishop Valera y Jiménez in Santo Domingo to assert his spiritual authority. Haitian officials requested Valera y Jiménez to send over priests following Boyer's victory in the north in 1820.⁸ After consulting with the Captain-General of Santo Domingo, Sebastián Kindelán, Valera y Jiménez sent four priests to serve in Haiti. Kindelán later noted that the opportunity "was very convenient to reestablish the friendship and good harmony between the two governments."⁹ Among the four priests was Juan Pichardo, an archdeacon, who served as the vicar general. Valera y Jiménez's initiative followed Boyer's separate request to the Vatican for a bishop to serve in Haiti. Boyer would continue to allow the four priests to serve in Haiti, but Pichardo could not serve as the vicar general.¹⁰ By honoring Boyer's request to send priests, Valera y Jiménez took the initiative to assert his spiritual authority which he would continue to do after the Haitian government annexed Santo Domingo.

The Haitian president, however, had different plans as he partly blocked the archbishop's move. Boyer claimed to have requested the papacy to send a bishop to take charge of Haitian religious affairs. While undoubtedly surprised, even annoyed, Valera y Jiménez would not overstep his authority. The four clerics were to serve under the current vicar general of Haiti whom Correa y Cidró later noted "was an intrusive priest" as opposed to Santo Domingo's archbishop. The vicar general had previously worked with Boyer and could guarantee he would control the Spanish priests. This situation did not stop archdeacon Pichardo's claims to the vicar general position.¹¹ Pichardo ignored

8 Bernardo Correa y Cidró, *Apologia/De la Justificada Conducta/Del Ilustrismo Sr./Doctor Don Pedro Valera/dignísimo Arzobispo de Santo Domingo, en la con-/minacion hecha al Arediano/Don Juan Antonio Pichardo, Santo Domingo, May 26, 1821*, Archivo General de Indias Audiencia de Santo Domingo (hereafter AGI-SD) 970; Henríquez 1973, vol. 2:147–50.

9 Bernardo Correa y Cidró, *Apologia/De la Justificada Conducta/Del Ilustrismo Sr./Doctor Don Pedro Valera/dignísimo Arzobispo de Santo Domingo, en la con-/minacion hecha al Arediano/Don Juan Antonio Pichardo, Santo Domingo, May 26, 1821*, AGI-SD 970; Henríquez 1973, vol. 2:147–50.

10 Bernardo Correa y Cidró, *Apologia/De la Justificada Conducta/Del Ilustrismo Sr./Doctor Don Pedro Valera/dignísimo Arzobispo de Santo Domingo, en la con-/minacion hecha al Arediano/Don Juan Antonio Pichardo, Santo Domingo, May 26, 1821*, AGI-SD 970; Henríquez 1973, vol. 2:147–50.

11 Bernardo Correa y Cidró, *Apologia/De la Justificada Conducta/Del Ilustrismo Sr./Doc-*

the reports and Valera y Jiménez's orders to recall him to Santo Domingo. Valera y Jiménez saw Pichardo's claim that Boyer was sending a military party to arrest the archdeacon for his actions as a ruse to delay his stay. The archbishop gave Pichardo a final ultimatum: return to Santo Domingo or face suspension.¹² By partially working within the system and dealing with the Vatican directly, Boyer asserted control of religious affairs to obtain more priests in Haiti.

Events in Santo Domingo created the conditions for President Boyer to unify the Spanish colony with Haiti and bring the archbishopric into his authority. Anti-Spanish and colonial sentiments divided into two competing movements for independence. White elites in and around Santo Domingo City sought a separation from Spain while maintaining the social status quo. Free and enslaved people of color along with small farmers away from the capital city wanted for the Haitian government to annex the floundering Spanish colony which would transform Dominican society (Bryan 1995:22–25; Franco 2015:82). Dominican support for Haitian rule forced the colonial elite to move first and declare independence from Spain. While this cadre of elites toppled the last remnants of Spanish power on the island, their maintenance of the political status quo and especially continued commitment to slavery would ensure that the rest of Dominicans would give their support to the Haitian government.¹³ With the support and allegiance of various towns in Santo Domingo, Boyer marched peacefully with an army and unified the former Spanish colony with Haiti.

The unification of Haiti and Santo Domingo brought together two different realities regarding the relationship between the Church and State. The period in which Santo Domingo was a Spanish colony would suggest that the Church functioned in an alliance with the Spanish Crown. Both parties established this tradition centuries before when the Vatican granted Spain the *Patronato Real*. When Haiti declared independence, its leaders tried to procure such an arrangement that the Pope would recognize for the Church within the borders

tor Don Pedro Valera/dignísimo Arzobispo de Santo Domingo, en la con-/minacion hecha al Arediano/Don Juan Antonio Pichardo, Santo Domingo, May 26, 1821, AGI-SD 970; Henríquez 1973, vol. 2:147–50.

12 Bernardo Correa y Cidron, Apologia/De la Justificada Conducta/Del Illustrismo Sr./Doctor Don Pedro Valera/dignísimo Arzobispo de Santo Domingo, en la con-/minacion hecha al Arediano/Don Juan Antonio Pichardo, Santo Domingo, May 26, 1821, AGI-SD 970; Henríquez 1973, vol. 2:147–50; Guerrero Cano 1989:31–32.

13 L'acte constitutif du gouvernement provisoire de l'Etat indépendant de la partie espagnole d'Haïti, December 1, 1821 (Madiou 1985, vol. 6:260–64). Madiou noted that Gran Colombia's Constitution did not abolish slavery—which was also the same as Spanish Haiti's Constitution. This example was one of the reasons that made Núñez de Cáceres's Constitution incompatible with the Haitian Constitution of 1816 (see Madiou 1985).

of the Haitian Republic. As both parties attempted to negotiate the parameters of an agreement or concordat, the Church in Santo Domingo became part of a new environment where Catholicism competed with one of several sects. It was an area where the Church did not work in tandem with the State as it had done under the Spanish regime. These different experiences would in part shape the relationship between the Haitian State and Church as Santo Domingo moved forward.

A clash of religious jurisdiction documented by a Dominican cleric illustrates a consequence of this contrast of experiences. On June 28, 1823, Bernardo Correa y Cidrón wrote to Valera y Jiménez about his mission to Port-au-Prince. The archbishop appointed Correa y Cidrón as his vicar general to the Artibonite department in northwestern Haiti. He arrived the previous month in Port-au-Prince, the capital, noting how his voyage “went well with my health, and it has in no way altered at this present time, thanks to God.”¹⁴ Valera y Jiménez previously sent clerics at President Jean-Pierre Boyer’s request before he annexed Santo Domingo to the Haitian Republic in 1822. By sending priests to another part of the island, Valera y Jiménez asserted his spiritual authority over the island. He vested this influence in his representative, the vicar general. Correa y Cidrón’s arrival in Port-au-Prince may have been a formality for Boyer to acknowledge an earlier custom.¹⁵ After the cleric presented himself to Boyer, the Haitian president refused to acknowledge Correa y Cidrón’s appointment because the archbishop did not consider himself a Haitian citizen.¹⁶ Correa y Cidrón’s inability to take over the position of vicar general was a failure for Valera y Jiménez to assert his clerical authority as the archbishop. Boyer’s refusal was an example of the president asserting his powers as the leader of both Church and State in Santo Domingo.

Initially, Correa y Cidrón believed that the disagreement stemmed from contrasting interpretations of the archbishop’s role in the Haitian Republic. When he asked Boyer what was impeding him from taking the vicar general title, the Haitian president responded, “The archbishop is the archbishop of Santo Domingo; Santo Domingo has been united and integrated with the Repub-

14 Bernardo Correa y Cidrón to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Saint-Marc, June 28, 1823, Archivo General de la Nación de la Republica Dominicana, Santo Domingo, Colección José Gabriel García (hereafter AGN-José Gabriel García) 4, 5, C29, exp. 7, doc. 7.

15 Initially Pedro Valera y Jiménez had sent four clerics to Haiti at the behest of the Haitian government, Pedro Valera y Jiménez to Sebastián Kindelan, Santo Domingo, December 7, 1820, AGI-SD 970; Henríquez 1973, vol. 2:163–64.

16 Bernardo Correa y Cidrón to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Saint-Marc, June 28, 1823, AGN-José Gabriel García 4, 5, C29, exp. 7, doc. 7.

lic of Haiti; then the archbishop is archbishop and a citizen of Haiti.”¹⁷ The response of the Haitian president in part confirmed Correa y Cidrón’s view. Boyer insisted that Valera y Jiménez was a Haitian citizen and, as a result, under his authority as the Haitian president. He continued, “if he [Valera y Jiménez] is not archbishop and citizen of Haiti, then under no circumstances can the archbishop pretend that the president of Haiti recognizes his delegates and vicars when he does not recognize himself as a member of this State.”¹⁸ If Valera y Jiménez would not recognize Boyer’s authority over Santo Domingo, then the Haitian leader would not recognize the archbishop’s authority within the Republic. The clashing interests trapped Correa y Cidrón between the premier secular and religious powers on the island.

Correa y Cidrón also highlighted the perspective of the archbishop which explained the defiance of Valera y Jiménez toward Boyer. The archbishop believed that he was the subject of the Spanish king and the Pope even if he acknowledged the sovereignty of Boyer over the entire island. Valera y Jiménez previously professed his loyalty to Fernando VII, the Spanish king, since the first independence of Santo Domingo in December 1821. The archbishop would not submit himself to Boyer’s authority despite his control over the entire island.¹⁹ Valera y Jiménez claimed ill health for his inability to serve as Boyer’s archbishop although it was not clear whether Correa y Cidrón believed the archbishop or not. The archbishop used his resignation as a pretext to refuse a Haitian government salary, noting it would be “indecent for a bishop who had renounced his bishopric to receive a salary.”²⁰ But using illness to explain his resignation, the archbishop implicitly acknowledged the authority of Boyer as president. Valera y Jiménez’s inaction implies that he took Boyer’s claims seriously even if the archbishop still identified as a Spanish subject and under the authority of the Pope.

Both Boyer and Correa y Cidrón questioned Valera y Jiménez’s stance and inconsistency in his arguments. Boyer noted how Valera y Jiménez addressed his letter carried by Correa y Cidrón as the “pastoral leader of the Haitian country, naming himself his pastor and prelude.”²¹ From previous experience

17 Bernardo Correa y Cidrón to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Saint-Marc, June 28, 1823, AGN-José Gabriel García 4, 5, C29, exp. 7, doc. 7.

18 Bernardo Correa y Cidrón to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Saint-Marc, June 28, 1823, AGN-José Gabriel García 4, 5, C29, exp. 7, doc. 7.

19 Pedro Valera y Jiménez to Fernando VII, Santo Domingo, December 18, 1821, AGI-SD 970; Henríquez 1973, vol. 2:295–96.

20 Bernardo Correa y Cidrón to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Saint-Marc, June 28, 1823, AGN-José Gabriel García 4, 5, C29, exp. 7, doc. 7.

21 Bernardo Correa y Cidrón to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Saint-Marc, June 28, 1823, AGN-José Gabriel García 4, 5, C29, exp. 7, doc. 7.

requesting priests from Valera y Jiménez, Boyer understood the actions of the archbishop as an attack on the authority of the president. Correa y Cidróñ openly questioned the intentions of the archbishop by asking what would prevent Valera y Jiménez from accepting his role within the Haitian Republic.²² If he was the archbishop of Santo Domingo, which was a part of the Haitian Republic, then Valera y Jiménez held the same title for the whole island. Correa y Cidróñ's agreement with Boyer's stance suggests that the cleric indirectly accepted the sovereignty of the Haitian president over the Church in Santo Domingo. Perhaps Correa y Cidróñ sought accommodation with Boyer as the best chance to hold his position just as Pichardo did two years prior.

Or, perhaps the feelings of Correa y Cidróñ reflected the consequences this clash had on the Church in Santo Domingo. He noted that "there is almost no portion of the spiritual edifice that does not represent rubbish and ruin."²³ Valera y Jiménez and Boyer's struggles over sovereignty weakened the Church. Correa y Cidróñ chastised Valera y Jiménez for refusing the Haitian government salary. The stance of Valera y Jiménez and the ineffectiveness of the Church left the institution susceptible to the threats of "false and heretical" ministries.²⁴ This quarrel impeded the two premier secular and religious powers from uniting, hindering the Haitian Church.

Correa y Cidróñ's loyalty to Boyer and the Haitian State over Valera y Jiménez had other reasons besides the benefit of the Haitian Church. The cleric had previously experienced attacks on his integrity when Santo Domingo was a Spanish colony. Dominicans of this era questioned the loyalty and character of Correa y Cidróñ and the Church in Santo Domingo when the colony was under French rule. Dominicans associated France with secularism in comparison to the religiosity of the Spanish because Correa y Cidróñ cooperated with the French. Consequently, in his defense he published a pamphlet to Dominicans, with his version of events.²⁵ Haitian rule mirrored the previous French regime and forced Dominicans to choose sides that were not strictly dichotomous in nature, such as religious and secular. Correa y Cidróñ's

22 Bernardo Correa y Cidróñ to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Saint-Marc, June 28, 1823, AGN-José Gabriel García 4, 5, C29, exp. 7, doc. 7.

23 Bernardo Correa y Cidróñ to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Saint-Marc, June 28, 1823, AGN-José Gabriel García 4, 5, C29, exp. 7, doc. 7.

24 Bernardo Correa y Cidróñ to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Saint-Marc, June 28, 1823, AGN-José Gabriel García 4, 5, C29, exp. 7, doc. 7.

25 Bernardo Correa y Cidróñ, *Vindicacion de la Ciudadanía y apología de la conducta política del Dr. D. Bernardo Corréa y Cidron, natural de Santo Domingo de la Isla Española, escrita por él mismo, año de 1820*, Santo Domingo, August 26, 1820, AGN-José Gabriel García, 4, 9, C37, exp. 3, doc. 2.

backing of Boyer reflected this earlier reality because the cleric considered other factors including his own.

Correa y Cidrón perceived this conflict as a power struggle between Valera y Jiménez and Boyer. The archbishop tried to preserve his autonomy against the Haitian president's right to regulate the Church within the Republic's borders. A papal bull appointed the archbishop to his station intending for Valera y Jiménez to serve the inhabitants of his particular authority. The Pope's right to appoint the bishop to his post was something Correa y Cidrón conceded that not even Boyer could dispute. The preceding actions of Boyer would suggest that the president did not debate this fact despite the clash between the two. While Santo Domingo City was the seat of the archbishop, Haitian sovereignty determined that it was the responsibility of Valera y Jiménez to serve the citizens of the entire island.²⁶ The inhabitants of the island—whether Dominicans or Haitians—were citizens of the Republic. In other words, Valera y Jiménez as an inhabitant of Santo Domingo was, in fact, a Haitian citizen. The conflicting religious and secular authority shaped and limited the contours of Valera y Jiménez's defense of autonomy against Boyer's assertion of his authority as president.

The earlier experiences of the relationship between the Church and State in Santo Domingo and Haiti shaped the responses of Valera y Jiménez and Boyer. The archbishop was accustomed to a close relationship between the Church and State where this religious institution worked as a part of the political order. While Boyer and earlier Haitian leaders negotiated for a similar relationship, a Church-State rupture characterized the reality on the ground. The government curbed the privileges of the Church, and allowed civil marriage and divorce. The continued loyalty of Valera y Jiménez to the Spanish Crown and Vatican further worsened the clash between the Church and State after the unification of Santo Domingo and Haiti. Correa y Cidrón's description of the conflict between the archbishop and President underlined the impasse between the secular and religious institutions of the island. The preceding events also suggested further damage to the institutional strength of the Church, which we now turn to and explore in greater depth.

26 Bernardo Correa y Cidrón to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Saint-Marc, June 28, 1823, AGN-José Gabriel García 4, 5, C29, exp. 7, doc. 7.

2 Reforming the Church

The President commissioned a land study in which land the Haitian State could redistribute to *libertos* or the newly emancipated enslaved people. This committee included General Jérôme Maximilien Borgella, the leading Haitian officer in Santo Domingo, six Dominicans, and an invited group of administrators from various towns on the island's western side (Madiou 1985:362). Several months later the committee recommended that the Haitian government sequester property according to the following criteria: (1) former Spanish and French government property from the colonial era; (2) ecclesiastical lands such as convents from religious orders; (3) the properties of Dominican loyalists who went into exile; these were *capellanías* or chantries that had fallen into the power of the archbishop that the clergy now abused; and (4) mortgages that were in the Santo Domingo Cathedral's favor (Moya Pons 2008:222–23). The findings of the commission highlighted a need to change if not eliminate the different ways the Church obtained land.

The Church became one of the largest landowners in the former Spanish colony because of the process through which *capellanías* were obtained. A *capellanía* or chantry was a contract stipulating the terms of an ecclesiastical endowment signed between Spanish families and the Church (Moya Pons 1985:209). These contracts called for people to commit their properties to specific parishes and priests. In return for this donation, the Church agreed to perform religious services and funerals for families' souls. Dominicans assigned these properties to a family member who managed the assets while the priests performed mass as a personal chaplain to the family of the land in question (Lockhart & Schwartz 1983:16). If all the descendants passed away, then Santo Domingo's archbishop would obtain the land. Over time, this method enabled the Church in Santo Domingo, now under Valera y Jiménez, to obtain significant holdings.

The Haitian State also had to consider the consequences of obtaining Church property. Valera y Jiménez had proven to be a staunch critic of the actions of the Haitian government. Furthermore, earlier in the year Haitian leaders discovered a conspiracy to end Haitian rule in the town of Los Alcarizos close to Santo Domingo City. Among those tried by the Haitian government for the conspiracy was a priest (Gabriel García 2016:362–64). Although officials also implicated the archbishop in the Alcarizos conspiracy, no further action against Valera y Jiménez was taken.²⁷

²⁷ There is no consensus as to whether Valera y Jiménez was directly involved with pro-

On July 8, 1824, the Haitian State passed a law to move forward with larger land reform in Santo Domingo, enabling it to seize land from the Church. The law was consistent with Boyer's understanding of nationhood where "in the Haitian social pact, the property law was inseparable from the quality of citizens." The 1824 law was an important step for Boyer to realize his vision for the newly emancipated in Santo Domingo. The Haitian government targeted religious convents, monastery hospitals, and properties from other ecclesiastical organizations. The Haitian State felt justified in seizing land that belonged to the former Spanish and French regimes. These properties legally became a part of the Haitian government (Madiou 1985:403).

Boyer recognized that there were Dominicans that could perceive the 1824 law as an attack on the Church and its spiritual functions. There were already detractors who fled Santo Domingo, claiming that the inhabitants were disgusted with the Haitian army and that they criticized "the licentiousness of Haitian troops that was used against a religious people."²⁸ In response, the Haitian president assured Dominicans he would respect the clergy's spiritual place in society and their ministry in Santo Domingo. The Church had preferential treatment within the 1816 Haitian Constitution, and Boyer sought to keep its position within the Haitian Republic.²⁹ Under the 1824 law, the Haitian State was to provide monthly salaries for priests, making them the government's dependents. This act asserted Boyer's supremacy as the head of the Church in the Haitian Republic, justifying his ownership of its land resources in Santo Domingo.³⁰

Because of the 1824 law, the position of the Church in Santo Domingo would mirror its counterpart in the west. For instance, the Haitian nationalization of

Spanish sentiment against Haitian rule. In his trip to Santo Domingo in 1824, Felipe Fernandez de Castro referenced the archbishop and other clerics implicated but does not mention where he learned of this information, Felipe Fernandez de Castro to Overseas Ministry, Madrid, July 6, 1824, Archivo General de Indias-Estado Santo Domingo, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Luisiana y Florida 4.7. In his nineteenth-century work on Dominican history, José Gabriel García (2016:362–64) also stresses that the archbishop was involved in this conspiracy. While Thomas Madiou does not make the same connection as Fernandez de Castro and Gabriel García do to the archbishop in this conspiracy, it is rather telling that the Haitian historian referred to this incident as the Ximenes conspiracy (Madiou 1985:395–96).

28 Juan Francisco Brenes to Francisco González de Linares, Puerto Rico, September 16, 1822, AGI-SD 970.

29 Greene 1993:85; see Pradine Linstat's "Recueil général des lois et actes du gouvernement d'Haiti" (Moya Pons 2013:135–39) and his "1816 Constitucion" (Mariñas Otero 1968:163–84).

30 See Linstat's "Recueil général des lois et actes du gouvernement d'Haiti" (Moya Pons 2013:138).

the Church placed clerics' salaries under State authority as opposed to their self-sufficient means or being on the payroll of the Vatican (Rodríguez Demorizi 1955:310–11). By the time of Boyer's presidency in 1816, the Church in Haiti had official State protection but with limited authority and control over its operations (Greene 1993:80–86). Without more direct evidence, other influences likely shaped Boyer's perspective. With limited autonomy and more State dependency, the Church's position was the same for both sides of the island.

Obtaining and redistributing land provided a part of the pretext for the Haitian government to pass the 1824 law. One can assume that the deteriorating relationship between Valera y Jiménez and Boyer along with the failed rebellion in Alcarrizos figured into the decision making of the Haitian president. The 1824 law would change the structure of the relationship between these institutions into one that was no longer about Church and State integration like the patronage under the Spanish Crown (Betances 2007:19–20; Williamson 2009:63, 94). The 1824 law would result in the Church being subordinated to the State and reliant on the government to accomplish its tasks (Betances 2007:19–20).

When the new law took effect, it affected the material conditions of the priests in Santo Domingo. On March 16, 1826, José Eugenio Espinosa, a *vicarío*, wrote to the archbishopric office regarding a property donation because he no longer assumed that the Church would automatically inherit this land.³¹ José Joaquín Delmonte y Maldonado, former land commission member appointed by Boyer, granted the Church a part of his estate as a donation.³² Espinosa did not reveal the size or the value of Delmonte y Maldonado's land grant to the Church. The *vicarío* worked with the parish's *fiscal* or lay assistant who together figured out the donation would not be enough to support the Church in the city of Santiago de los Caballeros. Espinosa observed that the Church and parish would need "no more than 5,000 pesos."³³ The *vicarío*'s assessment of the donation according to the Church's function and survival illustrated the material struggle he now confronted.

31 José Eugenio Espinosa to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Santiago de los Caballeros, March 16, 1826, AHASD-Vicaría del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 79, box 1, no. 19.

32 José Eugenio Espinosa to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Santiago de los Caballeros, March 16, 1826, AHASD-Vicaría del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 79, box 1, no. 19.; Rodríguez Demorizi 1955:309.

33 The *fiscal* served the parish priest as his constable who made sure that the laity fulfilled their religious obligations and paid their clerical fees (Taylor 1996:325). José Eugenio Espinosa to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Santiago de los Caballeros, March 16, 1826, AHASD-Vicaría del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 79, box 1, no. 19.

Espinosa's further reports conveyed examples of this law's effectiveness and limits on priests. In this instance, the Haitian State was successful in limiting the size of land donations to the Church—which through the practice of *capellanía* inordinately benefited the Church. Espinosa pressed for the need for all mortgages and land transactions to have the proper land titles so that the Haitian government could confirm the new transactions.³⁴ Other historians have questioned the extent of the Haitian State reforms and challenged scholarly interpretations that overstate the impact of Haitian laws (Eller 2016:21–58; Lora Hugi 2012; Venator Santiago 2004:671–76). Espinosa's letter recommended some semblance of the Haitian government's presence in Santiago to regulate land transactions. Espinosa also highlighted land titles that entitled priests to lifelong salaries and to living on the land. In theory, Boyer lived up to his declaration that he would operate within the law and not disrupt the spiritual works of priests by providing the clerics an income. Espinosa's account implied the effectiveness of Haitian law and its inherent limits that prevented transgression into the Church's religious domain.³⁵

This account also illustrates the stipulations imposed by the Haitian government which further transformed the clergy's role. Espinosa explained how Delmonte y Maldonado would also be the administrator of the land grant to the Church, managing the salaries of priests living on the property to impose State oversight. By delegating this responsibility to Delmonte y Maldonado, the Haitian government shifted the responsibility to local officials.³⁶ If Delmonte y Maldonado died, the priests living on the land would continue to receive their salaries and remain on the property. The Haitian State effectively made the clerics government dependents and legally assured their protection.³⁷ Espinosa noted how the Haitian State's salaries came to “those of the capacity to engage with the land” and to maximize the output. The Haitian government expected its citizens to serve as soldiers and cultivators, and they did not exempt the

34 José Eugenio Espinosa to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Santiago de los Caballeros, March 16, 1826, AHASD-Vicario del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 79, box 1, no. 19.

35 José Eugenio Espinosa to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Santiago de los Caballeros, March 16, 1826, AHASD-Vicario del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 79, box 1, no. 19. While it is not certain how much priests in Santiago were entitled to under the 1824 law, Article 10, the government allowed priests associated with the Cathedral of Santo Domingo 600 gourdes (Madiou 1985:403).

36 José Eugenio Espinosa to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Santiago de los Caballeros, March 16, 1826, AHASD-Vicario del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 79, box 1, no. 19.

37 José Eugenio Espinosa to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Santiago de los Caballeros, March 16, 1826, AHASD-Vicario del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 79, box 1, no. 19.

clergy from such expectations.³⁸ Espinosa pleaded for Valera y Jiménez's assistance to obtain titles to the estates under their control to help the other clerics in Santiago.³⁹ Without the titles, the priests would not meet the requirements to continue living on the property under the new land tenure system. Espinosa's correspondence reveals the Haitian State's different requirements for the priests that made the clergy dependents and it also shows an effort to make the Church subordinate.

Silvestre Nuñez Fernández's letter to Valera y Jiménez further illustrates the decline in the priests' material conditions. Nuñez Fernández noted how these conditions made it "impossible for the ordained [priests] to obtain their benefits simply from *capellanías*." His observation suggested that Boyer's land reforms were successful in La Vega's parish and it invalidated priests' previous arrangements.⁴⁰ Nuñez Fernández needed support for the other religious orders, referring to "four minor orders and three larger ones." Unfortunately, he offered no further information about the specific orders or the amount of property the Dominican clergy had in La Vega. Nuñez Fernández's comments suggest that La Vega's parish's material conditions could not support the priests.⁴¹ Instead he reported on the new *capellanías*' inadequacy in terms of financial support. Priests living on *capellanías* celebrated mass and anniversary services for the deceased.

The relationship between the Church and State in Santo Domingo changed under Haitian rule because it made the religious institution more dependent on the Haitian Republic. A close alliance between the Church and Spanish government in Santo Domingo resulted in an integrated religious body with the State. In this scenario the Church had a major role in different aspects of colonial society and adapted its focus on Spanish authorities. The 1824 law targeted the practices of the Church: by collecting expired *capellanías* and offering the secular clergy a salary, religious officials became more financially tied to the

38 Haitian President Boyer had made his intentions and expectations known in one of his first proclamations circulated to the Dominican people, see "Proclama al Pueblo" (Mackenzie 1971, vol. 2:241). One scholar has noted that the Haitian government defined citizenship based on what citizens owed the State versus "the rights-based element of what the state owed to its citizens." These expectations included duty, obedience, and obligations to the government (Sheller 2000:98).

39 José Eugenio Espinosa to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Santiago de los Caballeros, March 16, 1826, AHASD-Vicario del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 79, box 1, no. 19.

40 Silvestre Nuñez Fernández to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, La Vega, April 29, 1828, AHASD-Vicaria del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 80, box 4, no. 17.

41 Silvestre Nuñez Fernández to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, La Vega, April 29, 1828, AHASD-Vicaria del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 80, box 4, no. 17.

Haitian government. Consequently, this change weakened the financial structure of the Church because priests now were economically dependent on the Haitian State to carry on their mission. The correspondences of Espinosa and Nuñez Fernández to Valera y Jiménez illustrate the priests adjusting to their new political and economic reality as the Church became subordinated to the State (Betances 2007:19–20). Not only would this hamper the ability of the Church to continue with other functions but it would also change the dynamics between parishioners, priests, and the State as we shall see in the next section.

3 Petitioning to Alternative Options

A shortage of priests in the Haitian Republic underlined the need that Boyer had for Valera y Jiménez and the Church to address the situation. José Salgado, the vicar general on the western side of the island wrote to Valera y Jiménez regarding Boyer's appeal for more priests. The Haitian president communicated to religious officials concerning "three youths who aspired to the priesthood." Boyer wanted the clergy to keep him informed of any aspirants to the priesthood.⁴² Salgado noted how Boyer pushed Valera y Jiménez to use his influence and the appeal of State stipends to attract more candidates. "[Boyer] had found that the assignment of the stipend that he wants to give was not against any of the laws of the Republic."⁴³ The Haitian president's response alluded to the law change after 1824, which suggests that the disagreement between Boyer and Valera y Jiménez persisted. As the sovereign and head of the Church in Haiti, Boyer provided the clergy with salaries; however, he needed Valera y Jiménez to recruit more priests. To convince Valera y Jiménez, Boyer suggested that Protestants did not have a problem accepting the State-sponsored salary.⁴⁴ Given the earlier disagreement between the two parties, this likely explains why Valera y Jiménez was not helping Boyer to recruit new priests. The Haitian president needed cooperation with the archbishop and Church for this recruitment.

Boyer sought to enlist the support of the Dominican clergy because they oversaw "the direction of spiritual exercises" for the new clergy. When nego-

42 José Salgado to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Port-au-Prince, March 16, 1826, AHASD-Vicarío del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 79, box 1, no. 19.

43 José Salgado to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Port-au-Prince, March 16, 1826, AHASD-Vicarío del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 79, box 1, no. 19.

44 José Salgado to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Port-au-Prince, March 16, 1826, AHASD-Vicarío del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 79, box 1, no. 19.

tiations between the Vatican and Haitian State stalled, Boyer was unable to obtain new clerics. The new priests were expected to learn the ceremonies of the mass and “secret prayers” that were said during the services. Experienced priests accompanied newly ordained clerics to celebrate mass for the first eight days before they could serve on their own. It was clear that the Haitian State could not train its priests.⁴⁵ Boyer’s power had limits and he needed the existing clergy to recruit and train new priests.

The need for priests illustrated the dependence that the Haitian government had on the Church despite the changes in the relationship because of the 1824 law. Boyer intended for the Haitian Church to train native and foreign applicants to the clergy and hinted at wanting them to serve in Port-au-Prince.⁴⁶ The president wanted new clergy to replace the existing ones on the island’s western side, who were leading “scandalous” lives, and it was necessary for the Church to safeguard “the religion of the faithful.” Without a fresh clergy to replace the old, the Church in the Haitian Republic would fall into further disarray.⁴⁷ A traveler to the island commented on the state of the Church and priesthood, noting how training an effective native priesthood would “give moral and intellectual elevation to the national character, and secure a permanence and solidity to the institutions of the government” (Brown 1972:274). If the clergy in Santo Domingo had accepted these policies, a stable Haitian Church would likely have been the centerpiece of Boyer’s reforms in Santo Domingo. Nevertheless, the national Church could not be accomplished without the help of the existing clergy. The Haitian Church reforms made this need and the government’s limitations more acute.

The lack of clergy was what in part led the Mocanos mentioned in the opening vignette to petition Valera y Jiménez. They used both official support and their earlier relationship with Sánchez Cabrera to make their argument. The petitioners emphasized the priest’s impact on their “figurative hearts,” which another cleric could not replace. Among the signatures of the Mocanos petition were the town’s military officer Captain Agustin Sicard, his administrative assistant Manuel Angeles, and “the majority of the inhabitants.”⁴⁸ Sicard supported the Mocanos’ requests for Sánchez Cabrera and vouched for the cleric’s

45 Gabriel Sánchez Cabrera to Pedro Valera, Santo Domingo, January 23, 1823, AHASD-Vicaría del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 81, box 4, no. 10.

46 José Salgado to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Port-au-Prince, March 16, 1826, AHASD-Vicarío del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 79, box 1, no. 19.

47 José Salgado to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Port-au-Prince, March 16, 1826, AHASD-Vicarío del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 79, box 1, no. 19.

48 Town of Our Lady of Rosario of Moca’s Residents to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Moca, August 14, 1827, AHASD-Vicaría del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 81, box 4, no. 10.

conduct, which made him suitable to serve in Moca. Sicard even referred to Sánchez Cabrera as “our priest” stressing his support for this cleric.⁴⁹ The officer’s petition legitimized the Mocanos’ request. Sicard ended his request by petitioning Valera y Jiménez not to send any priest other than Sánchez Cabrera. The Church may have licensed Sánchez Cabrera to offer sacraments to parishioners, making him even more desirable.⁵⁰ By using Sicard’s appeal with their earlier relationship with Sánchez Cabrera, the Mocanos had a stronger argument to back their petition.

Clerics also interceded on behalf of their parishioners in their requests to the archbishop. This showed that the Church and State conflicts included the laity or worshippers. On May 8, 1829, José Eugenio Espinosa requested permission and funds to rebuild a chapel for the town of San José de las Matas.⁵¹ The town’s proximity to Santiago explains why Espinosa petitioned on behalf of the town. In his report, Espinosa blamed the “indigenous” for burning down the old chapel where the Matenses previously worshiped. Without more clues, one could surmise that Espinosa referred to people who looked Amerindian. San José de las Matas inhabitants offered money to rebuild the chapel so that they would have a place to receive sacraments.⁵² Like in Moca, Dominicans in San José de las Matas cited the difficulty in traveling to other towns to receive sacraments. These instances of celebration and worship provided parishioners with opportunities to create new kinship bonds and reinforced old ones. Parishioners in San José de las Matas would be rebuilding an important part of their community.⁵³ Espinosa served as an interlocutor on behalf of Dominicans in San José de las Matas with Valera y Jiménez in Santo Domingo City.

Despite the reforms the Haitian State passed to subordinate the Church to the government in Santo Domingo, Boyer created an interdependence between the main secular and religious institutions on the island (Betances 2007:19–22).

49 Funcionarios y Personajes, 1822–1843 (Rodríguez Demorizi 1955:327); Agustín Sicard to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Moca, August 14, 1827, AHASD-Vicaría del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 81, box 4, no. 10.

50 Despite being ordained, many priests did not administer the sacraments or hear confessions. Those priests whom the Church licensed to administer the sacraments were those tied to *capellanías* (Taylor 1996:78). Agustín Sicard to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, Moca, August 14, 1827, AHASD-Vicaría del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 81, box 4, no. 10.

51 José Eugenio Espinosa to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, San José de las Matas, May 9, 1829, AHASD-Vicaría del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 79, box 1, no. 19.

52 José Eugenio Espinosa to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, San José de las Matas, May 9, 1829, AHASD-Vicaría del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 79, box 1, no. 19.

53 José Eugenio Espinosa to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, San José de las Matas, May 9, 1829, AHASD-Vicaría del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 79, box 1, no. 19; Lockhart & Schwartz 1983:15.

The laws reinforced the role of this national Church in recruiting, training, and sending priests. Valera y Jiménez could not and likely would not assist Boyer with the shortage of clerics even as the Dominican parishioners suffered. While the Haitian State had the final authority within the Republic's borders, the Church was crucial for the clerics of the island because it trained and appointed them.

Other Dominican parishioners from San José de las Matas followed Espinoza's example and showed that they did not rely solely on the clerics to assert themselves because of the earlier reforms in 1824. Francisco Estevez emphasized the difficulty of worshiping at another place. Estevez framed the issue as long-standing by highlighting the thirty years since the Matenses last heard mass in the vicinity.⁵⁴ The location of San José de la Matas required Dominicans either to travel to other places to receive the sacraments such as La Vega where priests ministered to the inhabitants. Like Espinosa's message, Estevez's account insinuates that the Matenses shaped their cleric's message even as they supplemented the letter with their petitions.⁵⁵ This meant that the local inhabitants had a larger role in dictating who would take care of their religious needs. José González, a justice of the peace, underlined the issue of distance which prevented the inhabitants from traveling to other towns to receive the sacraments. González cited examples such as rivers to underline the difficulty of travel which inhabitants faced. Despite the similarity in messages, the nuances in content convey how Estevez and González's petitions were far from formulaic.⁵⁶ Their petitions supported Espinosa's account and made a stronger appeal for the funds to rebuild the chapel in San José de la Matas, which were no longer available because of the Haitian Church reforms in Santo Domingo.

The Matenses had experienced life in the town both before and after the chapel's destruction. Juan Padilla noted how the chapel was the site where he and others celebrated the town's patron saint San Ignacio. Padilla's account illustrated the chapel's importance for social gatherings and festivities.⁵⁷ González, the justice of the peace, recalled the difficulty facing priests traveling to San José de las Matas to minister to the inhabitants after they lost their chapel. The Matenses used the chapel's former site as a cemetery. With fewer funds

54 Francisco Estevez to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, San José de las Matas, May 8, 1829, AHASD-Vicaría del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 79, box 1, no. 19.

55 Francisco Estevez to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, San José de las Matas, May 8, 1829, AHASD-Vicaría del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 79, box 1, no. 19.

56 José Gonzalez to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, San José de las Matas, May 8, 1829, AHASD-Vicaría del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 79, box 1, no. 19.

57 Juan Padilla to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, San José de las Matas, May 8, 1829, AHASD-Vicaría del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 79, box 1, no. 19.

for the Church to sustain itself after the 1824 law and the difficulty in recruiting and training priests, external factors possibly contributed to the situation faced in San José de las Matas.⁵⁸ By enlisting Espinosa to petition for more funds, the Matenses illustrated their ingenuity by taking advantage of San José de las Matas's proximity to Santiago. Officials could still make and receive reports as Espinosa did a day later.⁵⁹ The petitioners could now appeal on behalf of a town where religion was at the community's core and where there was a dire need for a chapel to replace the one that was destroyed.

Valera y Jiménez's noncommittal response was probably a consequence of a weakened Church after the Haitian reforms. The archbishop requested the communications from the priest serving the town to provide Valera y Jiménez more information.⁶⁰ He stressed the importance of the opportunity for the Matenses to worship and receive their sacraments. If one were to consider the political and financial handicaps Valera y Jiménez and clerics faced earlier, it was advisable that they follow a prudent approach to resolve the different issues plaguing various areas in Santo Domingo.⁶¹ Unfortunately, the documents do not mention whether Church officials resolved the issue, but in this instance, they reveal how Espinosa served as the link between Valera y Jiménez and parishioners. While the cleric interceded, and framed their response, the Matenses' appeal served as evidence.⁶² The ambiguity within Valera y Jiménez's response indicates that acknowledging the problem was important and suggests that the Haitian reforms limited the Church's response to the Matenses.

The stance of Valera y Jiménez toward Boyer would contribute to the exodus of the archbishop from Santo Domingo. General Borgella, the leading Haitian official in Santo Domingo, believed that Valera y Jiménez was in communication with Spanish authorities and that he aided their efforts to undermine Haitian rule (Gabriel García 2016:385). While it is not certain whether the archbishop secretly wrote to Spanish officials in Madrid or the Caribbean, Valera y Jiménez already expressed his continued loyalty to the Spanish Crown. One scholar alleged that the Haitian government's bitterness toward Valera y

58 Juan Padilla to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, San José de las Matas, May 8, 1829, AHASD-Vicaría del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 79, box 1, no. 19; José González to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, San José de las Matas, May 8, 1829, AHASD-Vicaría del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 79, box 1, no. 19.

59 José Eugenio Espinosa to Pedro Valera y Jiménez, San José de las Matas, May 8, 1829, AHASD-Vicaría del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 79, box 1, no. 19.

60 Andres Rosonsel Prosenel to José Eugenio Espinosa, Santo Domingo, May 22, 1829, AHASD-Vicaría del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 79, box 1, no. 19.

61 Andres Rosonsel Prosenel to José Eugenio Espinosa, Santo Domingo, May 22, 1829, AHASD-Vicaría del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 79, box 1, no. 19.

62 Andres Rosonsel Prosenel to José Eugenio Espinosa, Santo Domingo, May 22, 1829, AHASD-Vicaría del Clero, bookcase 1, shelf 79, box 1, no. 19.

Jiménez caused them to plot the archbishop's death. When finding himself face to face with the prelate, the would-be murderer fell to his knees confessing his mission (Gabriel García 2016:385). This apocryphal story suggests a continuing schism between the highest-ranking secular and religious powers on the island. Valera y Jiménez likely did fear for his safety given the increased militarization of the island while the fact that the prelate requested his passport gave Haitian officials the right pretext to rid themselves of a nuisance.⁶³ Valera y Jiménez soon left for Havana accompanied by former vicar general Bernardo Correa y Cidró, a Boyer supporter (Gabriel García 2016:385; Madiou 1985:77).

The power vacuum that resulted from Valera y Jiménez's exit meant that Dominicans could now also call on the State to intercede in religious affairs. Several Dominicans petitioned the Haitian authorities in 1832, protesting about a priest serving their community. A disagreement between the community and priest stemmed from understandings and practices of worship.⁶⁴ These Dominicans marshaled support from others in the community to offer credibility to their complaint to the Haitian authorities, and they expected the State to mediate. The community noted how various public officials such as the justice of the peace and another army commander supported their request, and there were "more than 100 of the most notable of the people without counting the women and children," suggesting a consensus among the community's males.⁶⁵ As officers and leaders within the community, they aligned themselves with those having the best interests of the Haitian State and society. The petitioners stressed the importance of religion in their argument as a way of allying the interests of Haitian officials with the community's. They looked to the authorities and not the Church to rectify the doctrinal dispute between the community leaders and the clergy.⁶⁶ Communal support among the solicitors legitimized their case and persuaded the authorities to rule in their favor.

The petitioners highlighted their knowledge of Church doctrine and their religiosity as a part of their argument. The Dominicans viewed how Church law "prohibited the priests from conducting ecclesiastical burials for the bodies

63 Historians differ in their account of Valera y Jiménez's reasons for leaving Santo Domingo, with Gabriel García siding with the prelate. Haitian historian Thomas Madiou was of the opinion that Valera y Jiménez's request for his passport conveyed to the Haitian authorities the archbishop's desire to resign from his post (Gabriel García 2016:385; Madiou 1985:77).

64 Notable Dominicans to District Commander General, Santo Domingo, July 26, 1832, AGN-José Gabriel García 4, 11, C40, exp. 1, doc. 16.

65 Notable Dominicans to District Commander General, Santo Domingo, July 26, 1832, AGN-José Gabriel García 4, 11, C40, exp. 1, doc. 16.

66 Notable Dominicans to District Commander General, Santo Domingo, July 26, 1832, AGN-José Gabriel García 4, 11, C40, exp. 1, doc. 16.

of Catholics.” This fact may have been common knowledge to the petitioners; however, their silence on the buried suggests that not all had a problem with the priests’ actions.⁶⁷ The petitioners combined their familiarity with Church practices by referring to their involvement in religious celebrations. These events mixed religious holidays and feast days together with profane festivities, which could include dancing and bullfighting, sanctioned by the Church. Through focusing on such festivities and emphasizing their consistency since before the Haitian Unification, the petitioners presented themselves as pious and undeserving of any slander.⁶⁸ The Dominicans accused the priest’s actions as a bad example for their community’s youth. The cleric’s mistakes would have a “pernicious effect” on the adolescents who were not old enough to know the “primary rudiments” of their faith. By including the community’s young people, the petitioners illustrated how this disagreement was disruptive to the larger community.⁶⁹ The petitioners asserted their familiarity with their faith and religious doctrine to advocate for the priest’s removal.

While the lack of trained clerics affected communities in Moca, San José de la Matas, and Santo Domingo City, the new relationship between the Church and State created alternative avenues for Dominicans to seek redress. Whether the impact was positive or negative, the petitions illustrated that clerics were a part of these societies. The Dominicans in the first two examples stressed the clerical relationships the religious functions performed. Town officials concurred with the inhabitants, legitimizing their requests. The State’s reliance on the Church for priests and the examples of Moca and San José de las Matas illustrate that Boyer could not make the religious institution completely subordinate to the State. The last community in Santo Domingo City resisted their cleric, highlighting how his religious teachings threatened the community’s stability. The Dominicans stressed their knowledge of Church customs and traditions to demonstrate their religiosity to the Haitian State officials. This petition differed from the Mocanos and Matenses who submitted their petitions to Valera y Jiménez through intermediaries to discuss their issues. The Dominicans’ appeals illustrate that the Haitian reforms created an alternative authority to the Church in matters of religious functions even if the State could not fully circumvent this religious institution.

67 Notable Dominicans to District Commander General, Santo Domingo, July 26, 1832, AGN-José Gabriel García 4, 11, C40, exp. 1, doc. 16.

68 Notable Dominicans to District Commander General, Santo Domingo, July 26, 1832, AGN-José Gabriel García 4, 11, C40, exp. 1, doc. 16; Guerrero Cano 1989:65–67.

69 Notable Dominicans to District Commander General, July 26, 1832, AGN-José Gabriel García 4, 11, C40, exp. 1, doc. 16.

4 Conclusion

On April 30, 1843, priest Gaspar Hernandes published a sermon arguing that the 21 years under Boyer were both a source of division and unity for the island's inhabitants. Boyer "looked to give Dominicans a fraternal arm, and to unite with them as neighbors, without change nor harm in anything of their destinies and properties. But when the men entered, how far they were from keeping their promises!"⁷⁰ For Hernandes, Boyer's reforms suppressed the Catholic Church and brought Dominicans such misery. Faith and religion under the Church was what Hernandes understood as freedom, and without religion there was no "liberty." Unimpeded, religion was not only a source of liberty but also, a unifying force. Boyer's regime had succeeded in alienating not just priests such as Hernandes but, according to the cleric, Dominicans as well.⁷¹ Hernandes understood religion, specifically Catholicism, to unite different segments of the population to come together. He found that Haitian State under Boyer had divided Dominicans, which stopped them from supporting the Republic as they had done initially. For the cleric, Catholicism was what brought all inhabitants together.

The sermon of Hernandes presents a narrative of betrayal, alienation, and discontent about the damage inflicted by Haitian reforms against the Church but speaks little to those direct influences on the clergy and laity. Focusing only on the perspectives of Hernandes and other members of the religious and secular elite presents a negative view of the Haitian State that scholars connect to Dominican independence in 1844.⁷² That said, the Haitian State also had the power to intercede on the behalf of parishioners in Santo Domingo (Dubois 2012; Nicholls 1996; and Trouillot 1990).

Although Haitian reforms negatively affected the clergy and Church hierarchy, these laws also offered parishioners opportunities to present their grievances to two different authorities. This analysis supplements complementing larger political histories of the Church and State relations in Latin America with an analysis on the clergy and laity in the Caribbean (Guerrero Cano 1989; Taylor 1996; and Van Young 2001). With this focus, this article challenges narratives such as Hernandes's sermon that suggested that Haitian reforms contributed to the end of its rule in Santo Domingo.⁷³

70 Hernandes 1843, AGN-José Gabriel García 4, 5, C29, exp. 3, doc. 2.

71 Hernandes 1843, AGN-José Gabriel García 4, 5, C29, exp. 3, doc. 2.

72 Gabriel García 2016; Martínez-Fernández 1995; Nouel 1979; and Pérez Memon 1984.

73 Eller 2011, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2019; Lora Hugi 2012, 2016; Nessler 2016; Ulrickson 2018, 2019; Walker 2018, 2019; and Yingling 2015, 2016.

An analysis of Church reform in Santo Domingo reveals a link between State formation and assertions of sovereignty at the diplomatic level. This reexamination of the Haitian State as an aggressor against the Church in Santo Domingo is part of a larger trend reevaluating the actions and roles of Haiti during the nineteenth century (Dubois 2012, 2014; Dupuy 2019; and Sepinwall 2013). Not only did Haiti challenge and assert its authority as a nation state to major Atlantic states but it also navigated the difficulties of gaining recognition from hostile slaves and former slave powers (Gaffield 2015; Salt 2019). Gaffield's study on negotiations between the Haitian government and the Holy See offers an example of a strategy that helped Haiti obtain equal footing with the rest of the nations through Christianity (Gaffield 2020). As a result, Church reform in Santo Domingo showed the importance of these diplomatic talks for events at the local level.

The law of 1824 passed by the Haitian government created a triangular power dynamic between the Church, State, and inhabitants of Santo Domingo because it transformed the existing partnership that both institutions had. The divergent experiences of Church and State relations for Valera y Jiménez under Spanish rule and Boyer as the Haitian president shaped their responses once Santo Domingo became unified with Haiti. The Church in Santo Domingo went from having a relationship of integration with the Spanish State to one of domination in which priests became more reliant on the Haitian State for their material well-being. Without a formal relationship established between the Vatican and Haitian government, Church and State relations were marked by rupture. While parishioners suffered from a lack of priests, the 1824 law created the conditions for competing authorities to exist. Far from separating Dominicans from the State, the aftermath of Haitian reforms resulted in the parishioners having more avenues to appeal to either the secular or religious power that best suited their needs.

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