THEOLOGICAL HIGHER EDUCATION IN CUBA: A CASE STUDY OF
THE EASTERN CUBA BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Octavio J. Esqueda, B.A., M.A.

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APPROVED:

D. Barry Lumsden, Major Professor
Michael S. Lawson, Minor Professor
John G. Plotts, Committee Member
Ronald W. Newsom, Program Coordinator for Higher Education
Michael Altekruse, Chair of the Department of Counseling
Development and Higher Education
M. Jean Keller, Dean of the College of Education
C. Neal Tate, Dean of the Robert B. Toulouse School of Graduate Studies

This research attempted to provide a comprehensive overview of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary within the context of theological education in Cuba and the Cuban Revolution. Three major purposes directed this research. The first one was historical: to document and evaluate the rise, survival and achievements of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary, which has continued its mission through extraordinary political opposition and economical difficulties. The second major purpose was institutional: to gain insight into Cuban seminary modus operandi. The third purpose of the study was to identify perceived needs of the seminary. This study sought to provide information that can facilitate a better understanding of Cuban Christian theological higher education.

The Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary was founded in the city of Santiago the Cuba on October 10, 1949 by the Eastern Baptist Convention. This seminary exists for the purpose of training pastors for the Eastern Baptist Convention. The school offers a four-year program leading to a bachelor in theology degree.

The Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention experienced the same oppression from the communist revolution as the rest of the evangelical denominations during the sixties and seventies. The worst period for the convention and the Eastern Cuba Baptist
Theological Seminary started in 1965 when many important people were recruited to work at the Military Units to Aid Production (UMAP). Fidel Castro recognized in 1991 that the Cuban Communist Party erroneously made atheism its religion. Although the Cuban communist regime never issued an antireligious policy, in subtle ways Christians suffered the consequences of the religious ideological conflict. Nevertheless, today the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary operates independently and without the direction of the Cuban government.

Communism and Christianity have learned to live together in Cuba even though they started with difficulties. Theological education in Cuba not only survived the negative effects of the Cuban revolution, but also has emerged stronger than ever. Economic resources are the primary need of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary. The seminary has been through many difficulties during its history. Nevertheless, these days represent the best time in the seminary history.
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Soli Deo Gloria!
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposes of the Study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Research Questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancillary Research Questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. CUBAN PROTESTANTISM HISTORICAL BACKGROUND</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuban Protestantism before the Independence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuban Theological Education After the Independence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origins and Ministry of Protestant Seminaries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity in Cuba Before the Cuban Revolution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cuban Revolution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Support to the Government</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidel Castro’s View of Christianity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education in Cuba</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestantism in Cuba Today</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delimitation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures for Collecting Data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. FINDINGS</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Historical Roots and Milestones of the Eastern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary
Ways the Communist Revolution Has Affected Theological Education
The ECBTS Current Situation
Current Cuban Policy Regarding Religious Institutions of Higher Education

5. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS ………………… 138

Summary of Findings
Discussion of Findings
Recommendations
Conclusions

Appendix

A. ECBTS GRADUATING CLASSES AND ACADEMIC DEGREES ………………………………………………... 153

B. GRADUATES OF THE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AT THE INTERNATIONAL COLLEGES IN EL CRISTO ………………… 166

C. MAP OF CUBA ………………………………………………………… ………….. 168

D. HYMN CUBA FOR CHRIST ………………………………………………………. 170

E. LETTER FROM THE ECBC …………………………………… ………………… 172

REFERENCES …………………………………………………………………… 174
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Curriculum for the Correspondence School of Theology in 1905</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Rectors at the ECBTS</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. First Seminary Faculty Members</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. First Administrative Staff of the Seminary</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Faculty and Curriculum Used during the Special Course for Women</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. ECBTS Official Hymn</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Ideal Seminary Budget for the 2002-2003 Academic Year</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Enrollment and Student Body, 2002-2003</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. ECBTS Faculty, 2002-2003</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Seminary Curriculum</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Proposed Seminary Changes from the President of the Commission of Ministerial Preparation</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Recent Church Membership at Eastern Baptist Churches</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Main Building of the Western Baptist Theological Seminary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The Tabernacle Building at Los Pinos Nuevos Seminary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Welcome Sign at the Evangelical Theological Seminary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Nazarene Theological Seminary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Campus of the International School of Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Campus of the International Colleges in El Cristo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>First Graduates from the School of Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>at the International Colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>First Graduates of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>The ECBTS Academic Building and Dormitory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>The ECBTS Main Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>The ECBTS Library in the Santiago Campus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Cuba is a Caribbean archipelago with a population of 11 million and an area of some 11,000 square kilometers (Cantón Navarro, 1998). It was discovered by Christopher Columbus and claimed by Spain during his first voyage to the new world in 1492. Columbus described Cuba as “the most beautiful land the human eye has beheld” (Cantón Navarro, 1998). After more than three-hundred years under the control of Spain, José Martí initiated the last war of independence in 1895 and is regarded as a national hero in Cuba. In 1898 the United States intervened in the Cuban war against Spain and took control of the island under the Treaty of Paris. May 20, 1902, the United States ended its military occupation of Cuba, formally inaugurating its independence. In 1959 Fidel Castro’s guerrilla movement successfully overthrew the government of General Fulgencio Batista. As a consequence of the revolutionary movement, hundreds of thousands of Cubans fled the country. In 1960 the United States imposed an economic embargo on Cuba. In 1961 Cuban president Fidel Castro announced close relationships with the Soviet Union and declared Cuba a communist state. Cuba became the first socialist country in the western hemisphere and has continued with this political system until now. After being involved in many changes during the last century, with the same president for more than forty years, and with the loss of popularity of communism in the world, Cuba’s future remains uncertain.
During the late 1800s many protestant denominations started their missionary work in Cuba. In November 1898, the home mission boards of the American Baptist and the Southern Baptist conventions divided the island into two regions. The western zone (Pinar del Río, Habana, Matanzas, and Las Villas) remained under the supervision of the Southern Baptists, whereas the eastern zone (Camagüey and the East) became the ministry area of the Northern Baptists. In 1905, representatives of 12 churches established the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention (Convención Bautista de Cuba Oriental). This Baptist convention is one of the largest and strongest of all denominations in Cuba (Ramos, 1999, 1986; Guiribitey, 1998).

The Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary (Seminario Teológico Bautista de Cuba Oriental) was founded in the city of Santiago the Cuba on October 10, 1949 by the Eastern Baptist Convention. The seminary was started because: 1) there was a shortage of workers for the ministry; 2) its founders saw a need for a seminary that taught Baptist principles and practices; 3) none of the existing seminaries in Cuba were able to meet the needs of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention; 4) the money used to prepare ministers in other seminaries could be invested in their own seminary; 5) there was an advantage in having a seminary in the Convention territory to strengthen the churches and promote the Baptist Convention identity; and 6) its founders desired to attracting more people to the ministry (Sánchez, 1999).

In 1951, the seminary moved to where it remains until today on the km. 13 ½ of the main highway to Havana. Its first rector, Francisco Sabás, resigned due to health problems two months after the beginning of the seminary and was named rector
emeritus. Oscar Rodríguez assumed the presidency of the seminary at that time and was named the second rector of the institution on February 15, 1951. On October 10, 1953, the first students graduated from the seminary: five were men; two were women (Rosales, 1999, September/October).

After the Cuban revolution in 1959, most foreign missionaries left the country and Cuban churches and institutions lost almost all contact with the American denominations. The government took control of all religion schools except some seminaries. These institutions faced a lot of opposition from the government because of its communist and antireligious policies, especially during the 60s and 70s. In 1965 the Cuban government implemented a program to “regenerate” the worst segments of society such as homosexuals, criminals, and religious people. Many pastors and seminary students were forced to work on the production of sugar cane and citrus at places called Military Units to Aid Production (Unidades Militares de Apoyo a la Producción or UMAP). Most of these pastors and seminary students spent months or even years in what some considered “concentration camps.” Although the Cuban government relationship with Christian denominations improved in the late 80s, tension prevailed between the communist and religious ideals.

The Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary (ECBTS) has continued working almost without interruption since its beginning. The ECBTS has had to adapt to all circumstances in order to survive. For example, while almost all seminary students and many pastors were forced to work in the UMAP, the ECBTS implemented a special program to train women to take over the responsibilities of the Baptist ministry. In spite
of political antagonisms and limited resources, the ECBTS continues to offer theological and biblical instruction to the future pastors of the Eastern Baptist Convention (Rosales, 1999, September/October).

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was the pre- and post-revolution development of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary.

Purposes of the Study

Three major purposes directed this study. The first one was historical: to document and evaluate the rise, survival and achievements of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary, which has continued its mission through extraordinary political opposition and economical difficulties. The second major purpose was institutional: to gain insight into Cuban seminary modus operandi. The third purpose of the study was to identify perceived needs of the seminary.

The ECBTS is one of the main seminaries in Cuba that serves the largest protestant denomination on the island. The history and analysis of this institution may make a contribution to people interested in theological education by providing insight into: 1) conditions that are essential to a Latin American seminary's survival and growth when navigating through crisis; 2) the structure, goals, and vision of Cuban protestant seminaries; 3) the similarities and differences between Cuban Protestant seminaries and American seminaries and 4) the situation and needs of theological education in Cuba.
Significance of the Study

Cuba presents a singular history with direct implications for religion and education. The Cuban revolution changed dramatically the circumstances under which Cuba operates. On the one hand, the Cuban government values and promotes education in spite of hard economic circumstances. Cuba’s 95% literacy rate is probably the highest in Latin America and higher than many first-world countries. On the other hand, the secular, and for many years atheistic, character of the Cuban government has greatly affected all religious institutions on the island. Seminaries are the only religious schools that have survived the social and political oppression, even though they have gone through many hardships. This study attempted to explain the survival of the ECBTS. Also, because of the expulsion of almost all foreign missionaries and the isolation evangelical denominations have faced during the socialist regimen, it can be argued that Protestantism in Cuba has been genuinely Cuban before 1898 and after 1959 (Yaremko, 2000, p. xiii). This study sought to provide information that can facilitate a better understanding of Cuban Christian theological higher education.

Cuban Protestant seminaries possess a different *modus operandi* than American seminaries. Cuban seminaries present unique approaches to issues such as accreditation, policy, structure, resources and vision. This study provides insights into evangelical institutions of theological studies as it traces the pre- and post-revolution history of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary.

Finally, the reader should gain a better understanding of how political events affect Christianity. In spite of the hostile circumstances during most of the years of the
communist system, the evangelical church in Cuba has grown tremendously. It is estimated that almost 5% percent of the population is evangelical (Ramos, M.A. 1999).

Primary Research Questions

The main research questions of the study were: 1) what are the historical roots and milestones of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary? 2) in what ways has the communist revolution in Cuba affected theological education? 3) what is the institution’s current situation?, 4) what is current Cuban policy regarding religious institutions of theological education? and 5) in light of current Cuban policy regarding religious institutions, what can be expected if a change in the political system occurs?

Ancillary Research Questions

The following ancillary questions complemented the primary research questions:

1. What is the official government policy regarding theological institutions in Cuba?
2. What are the theological and missiological roots of ECBTS?
3. What needs and events led to the founding of the school?
4. What were the key pre-revolution milestones of the Eastern Baptist Convention that influenced the establishment of the ECBTS?
5. What have been the major post-revolution sociopolitical and academic events in Cuba that have influenced the relationships between the government and evangelicals?
6. In what ways have these post-revolution sociopolitical and academic events in Cuba affected the development and curricula of the ECBTS?

7. What are the institution’s current purposes, objectives and organizational structure?

8. What is the theology of the school?

9. How has liberation theology affected the curriculum of the seminary?

10. Who are the current faculty?

11. What is the academic lineage of the current faculty?

12. What is the age and gender composition of the student body?

13. What are the current curricula of the institution and what are they designed to accomplish?

14. What is the growth potential of the current campus and what are the resources of the library?

15. What are the current needs of the seminary?

16. What are ECBTS’ plans in terms of a possible change of political system in the future?

17. What can be said about the future of theological education in Cuba?
CHAPTER 2

CUBAN PROTESTANT HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Historical Introduction to Cuban Catholic and Protestant Theological Education

The Spanish conquistadores brought Catholicism to Cuba. They imposed their language, culture, and religion on the Spanish colonies in Latin America. After Columbus arrived in Cuba on October 28, 1493, the island had different names. Not until later did the Indian name of Cuba prevail. Two of these names had religious connotations like Santiago in honor of the patron saint of Spain, and Ave María in tribute to the Virgin Mary (Delgado, 1947). In 1510, Diego Velázquez de Cuéllar initiated the Cuban colonization and afterwards settled the first cities in the country. Bartolomé de las Casas, a Dominican priest known as “the Protector of the Indians”, accompanied Velázquez to institute Catholicism in Cuba (Ramos, 1989). In 1518 the first cathedral was established in the eastern town of Baracoa (Delgado, 1947).

Roman Catholicism was the only “official” religion in all the Spanish colonies. In Cuba this period lasted almost four-hundred years until after the end of the Spanish-American war in 1898. Spain controlled the hegemony of Catholicism in Latin America with the Jesuits’ work and the establishment of Inquisition tribunals like those in Lima in 1569 and Mexico in 1571 (Bastian, 1990). Protestants or “Lutherans” were considered enemies in the Spanish colonies (Bastian, 1990). Nevertheless, Catholicism was not as strong and popular in Cuba as the rest of Latin American countries (Kirk, 1989; Ramos, 1989). The Catholic authorities in Spain did not express enough interest in the ministry
in Cuba, resulting in a “precarious” situation during the first centuries of the Spanish occupation (Kirk, 1989).

The Roman Catholic Church’s golden age in Cuba began in 1680 with the first diocesan synod and especially with the tenure during 1685 to 1704 of Bishop Diego Evelino de Compostela (Martínez-Fernández, Figueredo, Pérez, & González, 2003). This period was characterized by the growth of church buildings and seminaries until 1832 when the Catholic clergy became more pro-Spain and elitist during a time of liberal and independent ideals (Martínez-Fernández et al, 2003). The founding of the Catholic Colegio de San Francisco de Sales in 1688 for poor children in Havana and the San Ambrosio Catholic Seminary in 1689 improved perceptions of the church and attracted the interest of young Cubans to religious vocations (Kirk, 1989).

The Catholic Seminary of San Basilio el Magno in Santiago de Cuba opened its doors in 1722. The Royal and Pontifical University of San Jerónimo in Havana was established in 1724 under the direction of the Dominican order. This institution changed its name to the University of Havana in 1899. The Spanish government took control of the University of Havana in 1842 when it implemented a new educational plan for the colony. Today, the University of Havana is the largest institution of higher education in Cuba (Ramos, 1986). Inaugurated in 1774, the respected Colegio Seminario San Carlos y San Ambrosio, rapidly became the best in Cuba and enhanced the respectability of the Catholic Church at that time (Kirk, 1989). According to Kirk (1989), this institution, still functioning in Havana, was a major milestone in religious education in Cuba. The
Cathedral of Havana was built between 1748 and 1777. This cathedral became the primary church of the country in 1778 and the base of the Diocese of Havana.

After the tenure of the Catholic Bishop Juan José Díaz de Espada y Fernández de Landa (1802-1832), Catholicism faced a crisis that lasted until the independence wars. According to Torres Cuevas and Loyola Vega (2001), four main factors affected the popularity of the Catholic Church in Cuba during the second half of the nineteenth century. First, the Spanish Catholic hierarchy controlled the Church in Cuba and opposed all independence movements. Second, the huge African immigration of slaves to work in Cuba affected the strength of the Church; many of them had not yet been converted to Catholicism. Third, the triumph of liberalism in Spain in 1836 that brought about the secularization of many religious institutions affected Cuba. Catholic seminaries in Cuba struggled with enrollment and Catholic schools started to consider lay education as part of their curriculum. Fourth, many Spanish priests immigrated to Cuba and took control of the Catholic Church in Cuba, despising the work of the nationals.

Important in Cuban Catholicism is the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre (Our Lady of Charity of El Cobre), the patron saint of Cuba. El Cobre is a town close to the city of Santiago de Cuba where the fifteen-inch wooden Madonna is protected in a basilica to her honor (Martínez-Fernández et al, 2003). According to the legend, the Virgin saved the lives of three fishermen from a storm in 1628 and appeared to them as the Virgen de la Caridad. The Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre has been a key element in Cuban spirituality. In 1916, Pope Benedict XV “declared her to be the spiritual patron of Cuba”
Martínez-Fernández et al, 2003). In 1998, Pope John Paul II symbolically crowned her as the Queen of Cuba. Followers of Santeria, an Afro-Cuban religion, believe the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre represents Ochún, the deity of money and love among other things (Lachatañeré, 2001).

The first Protestants to visit Cuba were pirates, corsairs and filibusters. These groups frequented the island during the sixteenth century. Some of the pirates were Huguenots, Dutch Reformed, and Anglicans (Yaremko, 2000). Although some may have held Protestant services in Cuba as Ramos (1989) suggests, the first documented Anglican services took place in 1741 when the British army led by Edward Vernon occupied the Guantánamo valley (Martínez-Fernández et al, 2003). From 1762 to 1763 the British army took control of Havana and converted the church of San Francisco into an Anglican church (Ramos, 1989). The English enforced freedom of worship during their occupation. However, after the English left Cuba, the evangelical presence on the island was no more.

The Borbonic family ascended the Spanish throne in 1700. As a result of the reforms they imposed in the entire Spanish kingdom, the exchange of international commerce and, indirectly, of new ideas began to permeate the colonies (Bastian, 1990). By the mid-nineteenth century North American Protestants began doing business in Cuba, although they were not allowed to worship outside their homes (Ramos, 1989). Diego Thompson, a Baptist Scottish colporteur, spent a few weeks in Cuba in 1837 during his visit to Latin America. He sold 268 Bibles and New Testaments during his visit
to Cuba (Anderson, 1990). Thompson was arrested in the city of Santiago de Cuba and expelled from the country (Acosta, 2000).

The first Protestant service in Cuba with the consent of the Spanish authorities took place in 1871. The Episcopal Church of the United States rented a hall in the Hotel Pasaje in Havana and brought the Reverend Edward Kennedy as the church preacher (Delgado, 1947). Nevertheless, Kennedy was allowed to minister only among the foreigners and was forbidden to work among Cubans (Martínez-Fernández et al, 2003; Ramos, 1989).

During the Cuban wars of Independence, many Cubans migrated to the United States. Some of them converted to Protestantism during their exile (Martínez-Fernández et al, 2003). In 1883 four men among those exiles returned to Cuba and started what would become the permanent presence of Protestantism: Alberto J. Díaz, Pedro Duarte, Evaristo Collazo, and H. B. Someillán. Alberto J. Díaz, an employee of the American Bible Society at that time, established the Gethsemane church in Havana that would become the First Baptist Cuban congregation (Greer, 1965). Pedro Duarte started the Episcopal church “Fieles a Jesús” in Matanzas. Evaristo Collazo started a Presbyterian church in Santa Clara and H. B. Someillán the Methodist ministry in Havana (Acosta, 2000; Yaremko, 2000; and Ramos, 1989). The beginning of Protestant ministry to Cubans had Cuban blood.
American Baptist work in Cuba began in 1884 when the Florida Baptist Convention sent the Rev. William F. Wood and the Cuban Adela Fales as missionaries to Cuba. They were members of the Key West Baptist church. According to Roberts Lawrence (1923), Wood became interested in Cuba through Adela Fales when as a young girl she expressed her thoughts about the Sunday school curriculum used in Baptist churches. The first official Baptist work in Cuba was labeled the “Baby Mission.” In 1886 the Southern Baptist Convention decided to start their work in Cuba through the Baptist Convention in Florida (Anderson, 1990). The Southern Baptist Convention was formally considered a “home” field in 1886. Yaremko (2000) believes this action represented the annexationist's ideals of many Americans at that time. The Cuban José R. O’Halloran arrived in Santiago de Cuba on August 31, 1898 and “officially” started the Baptist work on the eastern part of Cuba. Within two months he had baptized about one-hundred-fifty people and had organized two churches (Delgado, 1947).

From 1868 to 1878 what is known as the Ten Year’s War took place against Spain for Cuban Independence in the Oriente Province. Although this independent movement was important and had leaders such as the Cuban patriot Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, it was a failure because of its inability to reach the western provinces. After this time José Martí (1853-1895) emerged as a leader who united the whole country in its efforts to obtain independence from Spain. The slogan he used was “with all and for the good of all” (Cantón Navarro, 1998). Martí, a Cuban writer and politician, became the most important symbol of Cuban patriotism after the country's independence
(Martínez-Fernández et al, 2003). José Martí edited the journal *Patria*, founded the Cuban Revolutionary Party and fought for the independence of Cuba along with the revolutionary leaders Máximo Gómez and Antonio Maceo. The Cuban national hero died in combat on May 19, 1895.

Many evangelicals supported the war for independence from Spain. Alberto Díaz became a main leader of the independence movement and worked alongside General Antonio Maceo. Pastors Collazo and Someillán also joined the war. The Spaniard authorities arrested Díaz, but released him due to pressure from the United States because of his American citizenship, which he had obtained during his exile in the United States (Yaremko, 2000).

José Martí worked along with many Cuban Protestant leaders living in the United States in the promotion of Cuban independence. Churches with Cuban pastors in Key West, Tampa, and New York served as centers “of pro-independence conspiracy” (Ramos, 1989, p. 23). Nevertheless, because many Protestant leaders and pastors left Cuba as a result of the war of independence, the Cuban ministry struggled to survive. The Southern Baptist structure almost disappeared in Cuba during that time (Anderson, 1990).

Cuban Theological Education after Independence

The United States declared war on Spain at the beginning of 1898 and in this way became involved in the Cuban war for independence. As a result of the war against the United States, Spain lost control in 1898 of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines
The Treaty of Paris ended the Spanish-American war and the United States took control of Cuba. Louis Pérez Jr. (1992) argues that the American government during its Cuban occupation had as its purpose “to reshape Cuban attitudes, refashion Cuban behaviors, and restructure Cuban institutions in ways that would make Cuban nationality compatible with U.S. sovereignty” (p. 107).

The United States government ended its Cuban occupation in 1902. The American Congress added an appendix to the new Cuban constitution known as the “Platt Amendment.” According to Anderson (1990), the Platt Amendment caused great dissatisfaction among the Cuban leaders, who desired Cuba’s independence. The Platt Amendment granted permission to the United States to occupy Cuba whenever they considered it pertinent to their interests. Under the protection of the Platt Amendment the United States used armed intervention in Cuba three times: in 1908, in 1912, and in 1917 (Delgado, 1947). Also, the American Navy established a military base on the eastern part of Cuba in Guantánamo. The Platt Amendment guarantees American occupation of the 117 square kilometers of Guantánamo Bay, which remains convenient to its interests even though it is against the will of the Cuban people (Canton Navarro, 1998). In 1934, the United States gave up the right to intervene in Cuba.

During the U.S. occupation in Cuba, many denominations began their ministries in Cuba including the Southern Baptists, Southern Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, the Disciples of Christ, Quakers, Pentecostals, and Congregationalists (Pérez Jr., 1992). Yaremko (2000) mentions that more than twenty-four Protestant missions from the United States arrived in Cuba after 1898. Since many American
missionaries went to Cuba at the same time, it was necessary to have an interdenominational conference in Cienfuegos to impose order on their missionary endeavors. Some denominations focused on specific geographical areas: “Quakers and Methodists divided eastern Cuba between them; Presbyterians and Congregationalists located their missions in the western zones; and Episcopalians concentrated in Matanzas and Santiago de Cuba” (Pérez Jr., 1992, p. 105). Also, at a meeting in Washington D.C. in November 1898, the home mission boards of the Southern Baptist Convention and the American Baptist Convention divided Cuba into two ministry areas (Yaremko, 2000).

The first Cuban president, Tomás Estrada Palma, had important ties with the Quakers and frequently attended Protestant services (Ramos, 1989). The presence of Protestantism increased considerably in Cuba at the end of the war. Nevertheless, American missionaries and their mission boards removed Cuban nationals from leadership positions, which caused conflicts between them in many cases (Martínez-Fernández et al, 2003; Yaremko, 2000).

Establishing schools throughout Latin America was one of the major missionary strategies of American Protestantism. In fact, Protestants founded the first public schools in some countries (Deiros, 1997). These schools followed American curricula with mainly American teachers. The public perceived these schools as “American schools.” Yaremko (2000) believes that these schools were instruments for promoting American values and denigrating Spanish colonial policy and the Catholic system. Roberts Lawrence (1923) in probably the first book on Southern Baptist work in Cuba,
had a different perspective. She wrote: “American teachers are highly prized and a knowledge of English language is desired by every Cuban for his children. Hence mission schools, with their teachers, and their more strict curriculum are popular” (p. 65). Protestant American education was perceived either as an instrument of domination or a service to the community. Nevertheless, schools played an important role in Protestant ministry in Cuba.

Protestant denominations established many schools in Cuba (Pérez Jr., 1992). According to Ramos (1989), 29 Protestant schools operated in Cuba at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Cuban government and the general public had a favorable attitude towards religious schools. The only opposition these institutions faced came from parochial schools that viewed them as contrary to the religious and cultural status quo (McCall, 1942).

One of the first schools with Protestant influence in Cuba was the Girls’ school in Havana sponsored by the Southern Baptists. This high school-level institution was operating in 1893. The female school had to close in 1895 because of the Cuban independence war (Delgado, 1947). Also, an important school was La Progresiva, a primary school in Cárdenas sponsored by the Presbyterians. This school was established in 1899 and closed in 1960 (Pérez Jr., 1992). The Cuban-American College opened in 1906 under the auspices of the Southern Baptist Mission Board (Greer, 1989). The Cuban Department of Education granted approval to this institution through the Havana Institute (Delgado, 1947). After a few years, the school was renamed Colegio Bautista
and Dr. Vivanco, Dean of the Department of Education of the University of Havana, was its first Cuban director (Delgado, 1947).

Baptists established several schools in Santa Clara with a favorable reception from the community. A training school for missionary women was also established there, but it had to close due to lack of funding (Delgado, 1947). Ramos (1989) provides a list of other important Protestant schools founded during the early years of last century: Candler College (Methodist) in Havana; Irene Toland (Methodist) in Matanzas; Elisa Bowman (Methodist) in Cienfuegos; Pinson (Methodist) in Camagüey; the International Colleges of El Cristo, Oriente (Northern Baptist); Los Amigos (Quakers) in Holguín; Sarah Ashurst Episcopal High School in Guantánamo; La Trinidad (Episcopal) in Morón; Kate Plumer Bryan Memorial School (Presbyterian) in Güines; Presbyterian schools in Havana, Nueva Paz, Perico, Placetas, Sagua la Grande, San Miguel, and Santi Spiritus; and the Antilles High School (Adventist) in Santa Clara.

Origins and Ministry of Protestant Seminaries

Western Cuba Baptist Seminary

Since 1893, when it was used for the first time, the phrase “Cuba for Christ” became the motto for Baptist work in Cuba. Alberto J. Díaz, the pioneer of Baptist work in Cuba, was the leader of all Southern Baptist work in that country until his resignation in 1901 due to conflicts with the Mission Board. The congregation that Díaz established in downtown Havana, the Gethsemane Church, was expelled from the building at the Baptist headquarters. Díaz joined the Presbyterian denomination. C.D. Daniel was
appointed superintendent of Southern Baptist ministry in Cuba. With this situation leadership changed from Cuban to American hands (Delgado, 1947). The Western Baptist Cuba Convention was formed in Havana on February 1905 with delegates from eight churches (Rodríguez García, 1930). Moses Nathaniel McCall, a graduate of Southern Baptist seminary in Louisville, Kentucky became the sole leader of the Western Baptist work for forty-two years (Anderson, 1990). McCall’s leadership tenure began in 1906. He established the conservative doctrinal foundations of Baptists in Western Cuba. A Spanish-born pastor, Domingo Fernández became McCall’s successor as the most important doctrinal influencer of Western Cuban Baptists (Guiribitey, 1998; Vегuilla Cенé, 1997). For some years Domingo Fernández led one of the most important evangelical radio programs in Cuba, “the Baptist Hour.” Fernández left Cuba after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution.

Before the opening of the Western Baptist seminary, Cuban ministers were trained by individuals (Delgado, 1947). John McCall founded this seminary with six students in the fall of 1906. Therefore, this Protestant theological institution is the oldest in Cuba. The seminary’s first students had different backgrounds: a mechanic, a brick mason, a dry goods clerk, a day laborer, a lawyer’s clerk, a barber, a carpenter, and a Y.M.C.A worker (McCall, 1942). At the beginning McCall did almost all the teaching although sometimes he was assisted by visiting professors like Dr. W.W. Barnes, a Church History professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Forth Worth, Texas, who spent a few years in Cuba (Delgado, 1947). The seminary closed in 1927, in part as a consequence of an economic crisis. It reopened in 1935
with twelve students again under McCall’s direction (McCall, 1942). The Cuban government gave the important “Carlos Manuel de Céspedes” award for distinguished foreigners to McCall in 1945. McCall became the most prominent figure in the entire Baptist convention, occupying ten leadership positions including President of the Convention and President of the Seminary. He ordained all Baptist preachers and baptized more than 2,000 converts (Roberts Lawrence, 1942). After his death in 1947, he left a big leadership vacuum in the Western Baptist Convention (Veguilla Cené, 1997).

In 1950, the seminary location changed from the Baptist convention headquarters in downtown Havana to the place where it continues to operate today in one of the suburbs of the same city (see Figure 1). The Baptist leadership had the intention of building a Baptist university on the seminary location when they bought the land in the 1920s (Veguilla Cené, 1997).

Figure 1. Main Building of the Western Baptist Theological Seminary
Herbert Caudill, an American missionary, became the president of the Baptist convention and the seminary rector in 1947 after McCall’s death. Caudill, a graduate of Southwestern Seminary, directed the organization of the institution’s structure and established for the first time a record of faculty minutes, students transcripts, and a complete institutional program (Veguilla Cené, 1997).

Since the late 1980s, the Baptist seminary in Cuba has grown to levels close to those before the Cuban Revolution. From 1983 to 1993 the president was Luis Manuel González Peña. Since 1984 the Seminary president has been Leoncio Veguilla Cené. Veguilla represents a major figure in the theology and ministry of Cuba’s Western Baptists (Guiribitey, 1998; Ramos, 1989). He has occupied almost all key leadership positions in the Baptist convention. Veguilla, a graduate of the seminary in 1955, through Southern Baptist support studied in different institutions, including the Baptist Seminary in Lomas Verdes, México, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Forth Worth, Texas, and Southwest Baptist University in Missouri.

The Western Cuba Baptist Seminary has the goal of training pastors (presbyters). The program leading to a Bachelor in Theology or Pastoral Ministry requires four years of full-time studies. The courses are offered as modules that last approximately four weeks each. The minimum academic prerequisite is twelfth grade, or what is known in Cuba as “pre-universitario.” In 1996 the seminary had 38 students and a faculty of 21. In the school year 2001-2002, the enrollment increased to 60, the largest in the
seminary history. Almost 21 faculty members are graduates of this seminary and many are pastors of local churches.

The following officials direct the seminary administration according to the Convention records, *Memoria Annual 2002* (2003): Leoncio Veguilla, rector; Alberto González, vice-rector; Hermes Soto, Director; Nilo Domínguez, secretary; Dora Sánchez, administrator.

At the end of 2002, the Western Cuba Baptist Convention had a membership of 15,906; 186 local churches; and 1,111 house churches. 2002 has been the best year in the history of the convention (*Memoria Anual 2002, 2003*).

The Western Cuba Baptist Convention and its seminary have been working independently from the American Southern Baptist Convention since the beginnings of the Cuban Revolution. Nevertheless, there is a “fraternal” relationship between them, and the Southern Baptists have maintained their financial support. During the late sixties, the Southern Baptists sent money to Cuba through the Baptist World Alliance (L. Veguilla, personal communication, August 24, 2001). In October 1987, the Southern Baptist Convention changed the responsibility of ministry in Cuba from the Home Mission Board to the Foreign Mission Board (Greer, 1989).

Cedars of Lebanon Seminary (Free Will Baptist)

The Free Baptist Missionary, Thomas H. Willey, founded the Cedars of Lebanon Seminary in 1944 in the western Cuba province of Pinar del Río where he had established his ministry (Martiz, 2000). The name of the institution is taken from a
phrase in Psalm 104:16. Some graduates of Los Pinos Nuevos Seminary joined the work of the Free Will Baptists (Martiz, 2000). One of them, Rafael Rodríguez Josué, became the main leader of the denomination after the departure of Willey (Ramos, 1989).

In 1958 the Free Baptist Convention had 40 churches and more than 20 pastors (Martiz, 2000). Many of them left the country after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. The seminary closed because of lack of funds and personnel (Ramos, 1989). In 1988 the seminary reopened and the Free Will Baptist ministry was reestablished (Martiz, 2000). In 2000, this convention had 25 churches, 24 pastors, and 1,442 members (Martiz, 2000).

The Cedars of Lebanon Seminary offers a four-year program in theology. Thirty-one full-time students spend Monday through Friday at the institution and Saturdays and Sundays doing ministry on the mission fields. The campus of this seminary is also used for conferences and retreats. The current seminary president is Rubén Giniebra. The institution holds to conservative theology similar to the other Baptist conventions (Guiribitey, 1998).

Cuban Evangelical Seminary “Los Pinos Nuevos” (The New Pines)
The New Pines Seminary presents unique characteristics among most theological institutions in the world. Usually a religious denomination starts a seminary to train its clergy. In the case of the New Pines, a nondenominational seminary became a denomination (Zulueta Viar, 1978). The Evangelical Association “Los Pinos Nuevos” is the only national Protestant denomination in Cuba. Los Pinos Nuevos has developed
into one of the largest denominations in Cuba and has founded an international mission agency, the West Indies Mission, now known as World Team (Ramos, 1989).

The Cuban pastor Bartolo Gregorio Labastida, the American missionary Elmer V. Thompson, the Canadian Evelyn McElheran, and the Spaniard Isabel Miralles established Los Pinos Nuevos Bible School on September 25, 1928 with fifteen students (Zulueta Viar, 1978). Lavastida and Thompson, the main figures of the denomination, had different backgrounds when they first met in 1928. B.G. Labastida, a civil and chemical engineer, was named Sunday school superintendent of a Presbyterian church in Havana. He decided to pursue theological studies at McCormick Presbyterian Seminary in Chicago and returned to Cuba as a Presbyterian pastor and missionary. He was pastor of the Presbyterian church in Cárdenas and professor of “La Progresiva” school before he took a pastorate in the central city of Placetas. Labastida founded and directed a school for poor children in the town of Jagueyes close to Placetas. Elmer Thompson, a graduate of Midland Bible Institute and Simpson College, was teaching at Prairie Bible Institute in Three Hills, Canada, when he was invited to visit Cuba. Thompson rejected the invitation at the beginning, but changed his mind when Evelyn McElheran, a lady he was courting, moved to Cuba as a missionary. Elmer Thompson arrived in Cuba on January 13, 1928 and Labastida married him and Evelyn on September 10 of the same year (Zulueta Viar, 1978).

B. G. Labastida chose the phrase “Los Pinos Nuevos” (The New Pines) from a poem of José Martí. According to Zulueta Viar (1978) in his historical work celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Evangelical Convention Los Pinos Nuevos, Martí saw a fire
consuming a forest in Tampa, Florida, and thought that after the fire there was still a hope of new pines. Labastida believed that in the same way Christian ministry could bring hope of new pines to Cuba.

Three main events made 1936 a decisive year for the New Pines’ ministry (Zulueta Viar, 1978). First, B. G. Labastida resigned as a Presbyterian pastor and severed all ties with the Presbyterian ministry. He asked to be baptized by immersion to avoid conflicts with Elmer Thompson, a Baptist. Second, the New Pines Evangelical Seminary founded the West Indies Mission. Its first director was Elmer V. Thompson; its first missionary outreach was Haiti. Nowadays, World Team works independently of Los Pinos Nuevos, although they still maintain a close relationship. Third, the Seminary established the Cuban Evangelical Association Los Pinos Nuevos that emerged as a denomination. Every church related to this ministry has as its name “Iglesia Evangélica Los Pinos Nuevos” (New Pines Evangelical Church).

During its first years Los Pinos Nuevos Bible School had only two entrance requirements: good Christian conduct and some secular training (Acosta, 1991). The institution receives students from different denominations. Due to low enrollment, the New Pines Seminary closed from 1960 to 1962 (Ramos, 1989). After 1962 the school reopened with complete national support. At the present time, people interested in studying at the seminary must have previous pastoral experience, have the endorsement of their local churches, and have a twelfth grade or high school education (Seminario Evangélico de Cuba “Los Pinos Nuevos” Prospecto, 2002). Ramón Jiménez serves as the current seminary president. Los Pinos Nuevos Seminary is working on a
partnership with the Facultad Latinoamericana de Estudios Teológicos (Latin American Institute of Theological Studies) to grant graduate degrees (R. Jiménez, personal communication, March 12, 2003).

Figure 2 shows the main building known as “The Tabernacle” of Los Pinos Nuevos Seminary. This building is used during important meetings and also serves as the seminary chapel.

![The Tabernacle Building at Los Pinos Nuevos Seminary](image)

Figure 2. The Tabernacle Building at Los Pinos Nuevos Seminary

The influence of this institution permeates all Cuba. Guribitey (1998) argues that with the exception of the Presbyterians, there is not an important evangelical ministry in Cuba without New Pines graduates.

Evangelical Theological Seminary

On October 1, 1946, the Presbyterians and the Methodists supported the creation of the Seminario Evangélico de Teología (Evangelical Theological Seminary). In 1951 the
Episcopal Church also joined the project. These three denominations share the direction of the seminary (Guiribitey, 1998). The first President was Alfonso Rodriguez Hidalgo, a Presbyterian who attended Princeton Theological Seminary. The original curriculum “followed the pattern of theological training in the USA. Education for the pastoral ministry lasted three years while a parallel course for women specializing in Christian education lasted two years” (Tschuy, 2001, p. 255). The American Theological Seminary Association recognized the programs of this institution (Arce, 1971a).

The pioneer of Methodist theological education in Cuba was E. Clements. He directed a theological department at Candler College and later at Pinzon School in the city of Camagüey. Methodists closed their independent theological schools when the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Matanzas was established (Mitchel, 1949).

The Presbyterian Church in Cuba belonged to the New Jersey synod until 1967. Therefore, many Cuban pastors attended Princeton Theological Seminary with the intention of returning to Cuba to teach at the Evangelical Theological Seminary. As a result of the Cuban Revolution, however, most of these Cuban pastors did not return to Cuba (Ham, 1999). Also, Presbyterians used to send their ministerial candidates to study at the Union Theological Seminary at Río Piedras in Puerto Rico before the establishment of the Evangelical Theological Seminary (Davis, 1942).

Sergio Arce, a Presbyterian, was the Evangelical Theological Seminary president from 1969 to 1985. Arce played a major role in the elaboration of the Cuban Presbyterian-Reformed Faith Confession on 1977 (Ham, 1999). This confession was important because it is one of the few elaborated in a communist society (Ham, 1999).
In 1985, the Episcopal Bishop, Odén Marichal, became the president of the seminary (Ramos, 1989). The seminary motto is based on Mark 16:15 (Guiribitey, 1998). This institution promotes ecumenism and holds to a liberal theology (Guiribitey, 1998). The seminary hosted a meeting of Protestant leaders from October 26 to November 3, 1984. The Cuban Ecumenical Council sponsored this important event (Cepeda, 1986). Figure 3 shows the entrance to the Evangelical Theological Seminary.

![Figure 3. Welcome sign at the Evangelical Theological Seminary](image)

Since 1993, Ofelia Ortega, a Presbyterian, former Christian Education professor and a proponent of feminist theology, serves as the president of the seminary (Ham, 1999). She explained the four goals of this institution on a television program with different Cuban religious leaders in Havana on December 25, 2000 (La Participación de los Religiosos Cubanos en la Vida Social del País, 2000):

1. Church goal: to maintain a close relationship with all churches. The seminary has 269 students and keeps a waiting list of prospects.
2. Ecological goal: to foster love for the environment. Most students learn to work in agriculture.

3. Cultural goal: to promote Cuban culture. The seminary seeks to become a community center for the city of Matanzas.

4. Political goal: to encourage the relationship between the seminary and different institutions in the community. The seminary has an integral mission for its students.

This institution offers three different degree programs: a three-year bachelor in theology; a five-year licenciatura in theology; and a three-year master of theology. This interdenominational seminary offers singular courses in its programs. For example, Theology and Feminism; Cuban Theology; Contextual Theology where it discusses liberation theology; Theology of the Sacraments; and Ecumenical pastoral Ministry (Información Académica: Descripción de Cursos, 2002).

Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Center

The Memorial Center Martin Luther King Jr. was established in Havana on April 25, 1987. The main objective of this institution is “to serve and to accompany our Cuban people and their churches fostering reflection, socio-theological formation, communication, community service, and international solidarity” (La Participación de los Religiosos Cubanos en la Vida Social del País, 2000, p. 7). This Center publishes the socio-theological journal Caminos.
The director of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Center is Raúl Suárez, pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Havana. Raúl Suárez attended the Western Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary. He left that denomination because of a conflict of ideas and doctrine (Ramos, 1999). Suárez initiated a more liberal denomination called the Cuban Baptist Fraternity. The wife of Raúl Suárez became the first woman in Cuba ordained as a Baptist preacher (R. Suárez, personal communication, March 13, 2003).

Raúl Suárez convinced Fidel Castro to permit Christians to meet in their houses (Kennedy, 1998). He went to the work camps known as UMAP (Giraldi, 1998). Suárez supports the Cuban government and concurs with socialism. In fact, he agrees with the revolutionary hero Frank Pais who declared “when only one Cuban supporting the revolution will be left, I will be him” (Giraldi, 1998).

This Center offers courses through the whole country on pastoral theology to churches for 17 denominations. They have 83 study groups with more than 600 students. Fifty-nine per cent of the students are women (La Participación de los Religiosos Cubanos en la Vida Social del País, 2000, p. 7). Also, the Luther King Center promotes workshops on different issues such as spirituality, feminism and social justice, and socio-theological thinking. The center collaborates with different institutions such as the Research Ecumenical Department in Costa Rica, the Pastoral Biblical Institute in Costa Rica, and the Center of Biblical Studies in Brazil (Memoria 1998-1999, 1998).

Nazarene Theological Seminary

The missionary John Prescott established the Nazarene Theological Seminary in a place close to Havana called La Chorrera in 1945. Prescott wanted to train more pastors for
the Nazarene ministry in Cuba. In 1959, the government requested the use of the seminary campus, and the institution moved to a place called Punta Brava, also close to the Cuban capital (Ramos, 1989). Figure 4 shows the entrance to the campus of the Nazarene Theological Seminary.

![Figure 4. Nazarene Theological Seminary](image)

This seminary offers a four-year program leading to a bachelor in theology. The school has a current enrollment of 34 students. Visiting professors from the Nazarene seminaries in Costa Rica and North Carolina teach regularly at this institution (Guiribitey, 1998). All seminary aspirants need to be convinced of their ministry calling and have a minimum academic level of high school or twelfth grade (Guiribitey, 1998).

The seminary rector is Andrés Fernández Valencia. The academic dean is Ezequiel García, who directs a faculty of twelve pastors.
International School of Theology

The International School of Theology belongs to the Evangelical Church of the Soldiers of the Cross. This Cuban denomination is commonly known as Gideon’s Band. This religious movement, founded by the American Methodist Ernest William, is a combination of Adventism, Pentecostalism, and Pietism (Guiribitey, 1998). After the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, followers of the Gideon’s Band suffered persecution from the government because of their refusal to participate in social and military activities (Ramos, 1989). The relationship between this denomination and the government improved at the end of the seventies (Ramos, 1989). All full-time ministers must wear white clothes and avoid all kinds of “mundane pleasures” (Guiribitey, 1998).

José Celedonio Duménigo established this seminary in Havana in 1942. As shown in Figure 5, the seminary campus is located at a local church.

Figure 5. Campus of the International School of Theology
The current seminary rector is Vicente Amor. The school offers a four-year program for training pastors for the denomination. The International School of Theology has an enrollment of 11 students.

Christianity in Cuba before the Cuban Revolution

The evangelical church grew in Cuba during the first decades of the twentieth century. Martínez-Fernández et al. (2003) mentions that The Hispano-American Congress of Havana in 1929 was a very significant convention of Latin American Protestant leaders. This was the first gathering with a majority of native Latin Americans. The congress “was an important step toward making Cuban Protestantism more indigenous” (p. 524).

The Baptist work in Cuba flourished in the western provinces from 1905 to 1959 (Anderson, 1990). Catholicism was the most important and largest religion in Cuba. Nevertheless, the Cuban Catholic Church was also the weakest in Latin America (Crahan, 1985).

Before 1959, 72.5% of the Cuban urban population claimed to be Roman Catholic (Ramos, 1999). In the rural areas adherence to Catholicism was down to 52%. Protestants comprised 6% of the population. Nonetheless, only 6 or 7% of Protestants and Catholics attended church services regularly (Ramos, 1999). Cubans in general, although religious in beliefs, were not very committed in their religious practices. Also, Protestantism failed to have an influence on the highly educated segments of the Cuban society (Hill, 1933).
Catholic private schools had an enrollment of about 65,000 in 1959 (Kirk, 1989). According to the pontifical annual of 1960, the Catholic Church had 339 schools in Cuba (Ramos, 1999). Different Protestant denominations had 101 schools with a total enrollment of 30,000 students (Ramos, 1999). In 1960, the evangelical ministry had 212 ordained national pastors, 681 full-time national leaders, and 383 foreign missionaries (Ramos, 1999).

The Cuban Revolution

On March 10, 1952, a former Cuban president, General Fulgencio Batista, seized power through a military coup. This event divided public opinion in Cuba (Ramos, 1999). Batista took complete control of the country and in 1954 organized presidential elections, but he won unopposed because he registered as the only candidate. On July 26, 1953, Fidel Castro along with a group of dissidents, attacked the Moncada barracks in Santiago de Cuba in an attempt to create a rebellion in opposition to the Batista government. The attack failed and Fidel Castro was sent to prison. According to Ramos (1999), the archbishop of Santiago de Cuba interceded for Castro’s life. In 1955 Batista freed Fidel Castro and other participants in the Moncada attack.

In Mexico City, Fidel Castro organized the 26th of July Movement with the goal of establishing an armed resistance to overthrow Batista. In 1956, Fidel Castro along with his brother Raúl, the Argentinean Ernesto “Che” Guevara, and 79 more people returned to Cuba aboard the Granma yacht and initiated the guerrilla movement in the Sierra Maestra Mountains. Wallace (1973) points out that “prior to 1959, many individual
Christians supported and took part in the revolution, even though the churches as institutions did not” (p. 3). The Baptist teacher and son of a Baptist pastor, Frank País, and the Catholic leader, José Antonio Echeverría, became revolutionary martyrs. The Cuban government considers Frank País a hero and celebrates the anniversary of his death every year (Ramos, 1989).

January 1, 1959, General Batista fled Cuba giving the victory to the 26th of July Movement led by Fidel Castro. After more than three years of guerrilla operations the Cuban Revolution triumphed. In May 1960, the Soviet Union and Cuba reestablished diplomatic relations. The Cuban government then initiated a series of economical actions, some of them against American interests. Many American companies were nationalized. Cuban rapport with the United States deteriorated to the point where the two countries broke their diplomatic relationship and the United States imposed an economic embargo on Cuba (Bates, 2000).

Many Protestant groups rejoiced with the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. Evangelical ministers paid homage to Raul Castro at the Methodist Candler College where Fidel Castro Jr. was a student (Ramos, 1999). Furthermore, a big religious ceremony was held in a park in Havana to celebrate the Revolution (Ramos, 1989).

The CIA sponsored an invasion of Cuba on April 17, 1961 (Kirk, 1989). The Cuban army led by Fidel Castro defeated the assault, known as the Bay of Pigs, in only two days. Taken captive in the incursion were 1,180 men of the 1,270 participants on the invasion (Kirk, 1989). Three of those detainees were Spanish Catholic priests. Many Catholics publicly supported the Bay of Pigs invasion including an official statement
from Father Ismael de Lugo. Consequently, “the revolutionary government interpreted this proclamation as proof of a Catholic conspiracy and its policy toward the church changed noticeably” (Kirk, 1989, p. 96).

Fidel Castro announced the Revolution as socialist during the Bay of Pigs conflict and expressed his intention to implement a Marxist-Leninist system. This situation caused conflicts of opinions among the evangelical community (Ramos, 1989). Crahan (1979) points out “rather than having the opportunity to react and adapt gradually to rapid change, the Cuban churches were swept up in a period of turbulence in which many of their basic premises were directly challenged” (p. 157). Before Castro’s official declaration about socialism, he expressed frequently that the Cuban Revolution was as green as the palm trees. However, some people in Cuba used to say that the Revolution was like a watermelon: green on the outside but red on the inside (E. Reyes, personal communication, August 24, 2002).

At the beginning the Cuban Revolution’s leaders respected religious practices and tried to avoid confrontations with all religions. Ernesto “Che” Guevara declared on January 22, 1961: “between a Catholic and a Protestant or a person without religion; we should not stress the differences but we should stress the points of contact, all honest aspirations that would allow us to reach the victory” (Castro Ruz, 1997, p. 2). The Cuban government attempted to cooperate with all groups willing to support the Revolution regardless of their faith (Wallace, 1973). On January 20, 1960, however, Fidel Castro accused the Spanish priests of conspiracy against the revolution under the auspices of the Spanish ambassador (Dewart, 1963).
Kirk (1989) suggests three issues that caused initial tension between the Church and the Cuban government: 1) the fast and comprehensive socioeconomic reforms introduced in Cuba; 2) the government decision to reestablish diplomatic relations with the USSR and, consequently, the threat of an atheist communism; and 3) the Cuban Christians’ desire to praise the U.S. system in opposition to the Soviet one.

The Cuban government looked for ways to control the growing opposition within the Catholic Church (Kirk, 1989). One line of attack was to nationalize the schools run by religious institutions. In the early sixties, there were approximately 60 Protestant schools and 212 Catholic institutions (Kirk, 1989). Although the real conflict was with the Catholics, the Cuban government also took over Protestant schools. All religious institutions with the exception of the seminaries were nationalized (Ramos, 1989). Kirk (1989) mentions that the motivation behind the nationalization of private religious schools was based on political needs because “such an action promised not only to cut church revenues but also to dilute church influence over the tens of thousands of youngsters attending its schools” (p. 97).

After the removal of Monsignor Sentos as the Papal Nuncio in 1962, the Vatican named Monsignor Cesar O. Zacchi as the new Nuncio. Zacchi was a key person for reestablishing the dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Cuban government (Betto, 1985; Bünting, 1971). Zacchi became a personal friend of Fidel Castro. He considered Zacchi as a “very capable and intelligent person” (Betto, 1985, p. 224).
Religious support to the government

Some evangelicals not only supported the Cuban Revolution but also decided to cooperate with the government. According to Ham (1999), Rafael Cepeda, a Presbyterian pastor, made the following declaration on July 17, 1969 published on the Cuban magazine *Bohemia*, which caused controversy in Cuban Protestantism: “I have the conviction, and I assume all responsibility for sharing it, that Fidel Castro is an instrument in God’s hands to establish His kingdom among men. This situation is regardless of whether he has a religious faith” (p. 5).

The Evangelical Theological Seminary in Matanzas and its rector, Sergio Arce, became advocates of the Cuban socialist system. In the early seventies the Matanzas seminary was the most experimental religious institution in Cuba although it had less than ten students (Wallace, 1973). Sergio Arce was a major proponent of establishing a dialogue between the socialist government holding a Marxist-Leninist ideology and evangelical churches. Ham (1999) considered Arce as the most important Cuban theologian of the last thirty years. Arce had a doctor’s degree in philosophy and letters from the University of Havana and a theological degree from Princeton Theological Seminary. A Presbyterian pastor, Sergio Arce became the president of the Evangelical Theological Seminary in 1970 and was a prominent voice in ecumenical circles (Hageman & Wheaton, 1971).

According to Arce’s perspective, the loss of “American influence” after the Cuban Revolution was beneficial for the Protestant ministry in Cuba: “the exodus of North American missionaries and of the many ‘pro-Yanki’ Cuban pastors has permitted greater
freedom to follow theological lines of thought more adequately suited to confront the revolutionary social environment” (Arce, 1971a, p. 164).

Sergio Arce received opposition from many Cubans, especially in exile because he was accused of being sold out to Marxism (Hageman & Wheaton, 1971). According to Ramos (1989), Arce became an important figure in Latin American Liberation Theology. He openly expressed his support of socialism and the Revolution. In fact, Arce (1971a) went further to declare, “the Revolution has been, and is, a blessing for the Cuban church” (p. 169). After embracing socialism as the best socioeconomic system for Cuba, Arce (1971b) affirmed, “capitalism with its materialistic concept of work as mere merchandise is the most anti-Christian thing that can exist” (p. 207).

The historian Marcos Ramos (1999) argues that Liberation Theology, even though popular in many Latin American countries, failed to penetrate Cuba besides a few institutions and theologians. However, Mercado (1986) believes that Liberation Theology is a vital element to share the gospel. “It came to stay” because it seeks justice for everybody (p. 33).

Wallace (1973) points out that most Christians remained silent during the Vietnam War even though the Cuban government widely expressed its opposition and received the support of the Cuban society. However, The Matanzas Seminary, influenced by Liberation Theology, expressed its antagonism to the War. Raimundo García Franco, a professor at that institution, wrote a paraphrase of the Lord’s Prayer to support the Vietnamese and to denounce what he described as “American imperialism.” García’s rewording (1973), *Our Father who are in Vietnam*, exemplifies how the social-
political environment impacted the theological perspectives of some institutions influenced by communism:

Our Father, who are in Vietnam, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, through the enormous effort of those who love. Your will be done on earth—but particularly in Vietnam, which is the most critical place for all of us. That is where the bloodiest battle is being fought between good and evil, between the new world that is being born and the old world that is passing away.

Father, the North American imperialists do not love you, and in Vietnam they seek to bury the thought of your loving existence under a cloud of horror. But you are not longer alone there, we are with you, and the NFL is there to help you, too. Nixon has sentenced you to death and washes his hands, but the guerrilla movement, the people's army and international solidarity will never let that sentence be carried out. The valor of the people, of those who love, will make it possible for your will to be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread—and yet, following your example, we shall offer up this bread, if need be, and our sweat and our blood too, for Vietnam.

Forgive us our trespasses, as we are trying to forgive those who have trespassed against us. In particular, forgive us our lack of compassion and solidarity toward those who suffer, forgive us our cowardice in not having struggled more to ward off those aggressive hands, in not having joined our voices to the cries of protest, and our hand to the sword that does justice.
Because it is not a spirit of vengeance or hatred that guides us, but love, love of justice, love of peace.

Our Father, who are in Vietnam, you who hallow your name by standing alongside the poor, the oppressed and the slain, we raise to you our prayer for this tiny brother people, trusting that they will win. For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. (p. 21-22.)

In 1993 an ecumenical organization called Pastors for Peace donated an American school bus to the Ebenezer Baptist church in Havana. When the bus was denied permission to travel from Laredo to Cuba because of the U.S. embargo on the Caribbean island fourteen members of Pastors for Peace led by the American pastor Lucius Walker started a hunger strike inside the bus. The Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Center in Havana along with the Cuban Ecumenical Council organized different events to support the people on hunger strike and to claim that the bus would be allowed to leave the United States (Missionaries of Dignity: Pastors for Peace, 1994). The bus situation gave the opportunity to the Cuban government to complain about the American economic embargo. After twenty-three days of protests the bus was finally allowed to leave for Cuba. Fidel Castro declared this situation as a victory: “I’m sure that what happened in Laredo will always be remembered by our people. I’m sure that an unforgettable page has been written, and I’m sure that the gratitude of present and future generations will be eternal” (p. 55).
Fidel Castro’s View of Christianity

The Cuban leader, Fidel Castro Ruz, was born August 13, 1926 in the eastern part of Cuba. He attended three Catholic schools: Colegio La Salle, and the Jesuit institutions, Colegio de Dolores, and the prestigious Colegio Belén before he graduated from law school at the University of Havana. After the triumph of the Cuban Revolution on January 1, 1959, Fidel Castro became the most important political figure in the nation. He has been premier of Cuba since 1959, first secretary of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC) after 1975, and the Cuban president since 1976 (Martínez-Fernández et al, 2003). Although Castro abandoned Catholicism and holds an atheistic position, Kirk (1989) argues that Castro “has traditionally battled for the rights of the Christian sector, encouraging his colleagues in the PCC to adopt a less doctrinaire position” (p. 162).

Fidel Castro has made various sporadic commentaries about his ideas on religion and Christianity. In 1985, a Brazilian Jesuit priest, Frei Betto, conducted a series of interviews with Castro on the topic of religion. The interviews were published in a book, *Fidel y la Religión* (Fidel and Religion), which sold more than 200,000 copies in Cuba within a few days (Kirk, 1989). In *Fidel y la Religión*, the Cuban President openly discussed his position about the Christian churches and disclosed personal facts that were unknown until that time.

The book *Revolución y Religión* (Revolution and Religion), published in Cuba in 1997, presents a collection of Castro’s opinions on religion since the beginning of the Cuban Revolution. Although the edition only consisted of 1,000 copies, *Revolución y Religión* is probably the most comprehensive resource available on Castro’s views.
regarding Christianity. A series of direct quotes from Fidel Castro are presented to help the reader better understand his ideas on Christianity. All quotes unless otherwise indicated come from Revolución y Religión (1997). The dates of Castro’s words indicate the consistency of his views through the years.

Fidel Castro argues that the Cuban Revolution is not against religion. He explains that the Revolution struggled with religion, especially Catholicism, because many people used religion as a counterrevolutionary force:

December 12, 1959: We should not be bothered by religious feelings. What bothers the Revolution are the counterrevolutionary feelings (p. 17).
December 17, 1959: Our Revolution is in no way against religious feelings, at least with the idea that we have about religion. A religion that fleshes human ambitions, that follows human noble ideals is in no way against us. Actually in our understanding this kind of religion fully coincides with our Revolution that only pursues the benefit of men and to fight against injustice (p. 18).
December 16, 1960: We believe that being an anticommunist is being a counterrevolutionary, the same way being a counterrevolutionary is being against Protestants or being against anything that divides the Cuban people (p. 22).
November 29, 1971: What happened at the beginning of the Revolution was a conflict of social classes. Religion did not have anything to do with that. It was the religion of the wealthy and the landholders. They tried to use religion against the Revolution when the socio-economical conflict emerged. We had a reactionary Spanish clergy. We expelled them. We nationalized education for
similar reasons, because it was not on the agenda and did not represent a commitment in any way (p. 38).

October 20, 1977: I can truly assure you that never in any moment the Cuban Revolution was inspired in antireligious feelings. We had the deepest conviction that there should not be any contradiction between the social revolution and the religious inclinations of the population. Moreover, in our fight we had a large participation of the population and some religious people also participated in it (p. 45).

October 20, 1977: The conflict was not between the Revolution and the religious beliefs, but between a social class that tried to use the Church as a weapon against the Revolution. That is true...I am very familiar with the Christian principles and with the preaching of Christ. I have the idea that Christ was a great revolutionary (p. 49).

May, 1985: The conflicts at the beginning of the revolution caused the nationalization of private schools. The reason is that the children of the wealthy families who opposed the Revolution attended those schools, mainly the Catholic. Those schools became centers of counterrevolutionary activities” (Betto, F., 1985, p. 216).

Fidel Castro expresses his position that Christianity and communism follow the same goal of pursuing social justice for everybody. He agrees with Liberation Theology and sees this kind of theological approach to Christianity as a partner in the Revolution:
August 10, 1960: To betray the poor is to betray Christ! To serve riches is to betray Christ! To serve the Imperialism is to betray Christ! (p. 21).

November 18, 1971: I speak my mind without hesitation: we should see left Christians, the revolutionary Christians, as strategic allies of the Revolution (p. 32).

November 29, 1971: There are ten thousand more points of coincidence between Christianity and communism than the ones that may be between Christianity and capitalism (p. 34).

October 20, 1977: The Bible is a great book. I wish that every library would have a Bible. It is a cultural manifestation to read the Bible; it is one of the best books ever written (p. 59).

May, 1985: I would define the Church of Liberation or Liberation Theology as a place where Christianity goes back to its roots; where it goes back to a more beautiful, more attractive, more heroic, and more glorious history (p. 97).

May, 1985: The name of Jesus Christ was one of the most familiar names since I can remember. I heard that name at school, through all my childhood and adolescence...Christ did not choose the rich to preach his doctrine, he chose twelve poor and ignorant workers...Christ did not offer the kingdom of heaven to the rich people, rather he offered it to the poor. I think Karl Marx could have signed the Sermon on the Mount (p. 111-113).

February 2, 1990: I can clearly see that the ideal for a Christian who strictly follows the Christian thought is socialism and communism (p. 170).
October 25, 1995: I always have considered that Christ has been one of the greatest revolutionaries in human history (p. 189).

The Cuban president points out that the Cuban Revolution never had problems with the evangelical churches. Fidel Castro considers that evangelicals always have enjoyed excellent relationships with the Cuban government. He recognizes, however, that evangelicals were discriminated in various ways and that their right to participate in the Communist Party was mistakenly prohibited:

March 17, 1990: We haven't had any difficulties with other denominations with the exception of Jehovah Witnesses (p. 163).

April 2, 1990: I think that in these thirty years you had to go through a tough process, I have to admit it, with all those social relationships with the people, the revolutionaries, and the enemy...It is real that you have been discriminated and that political discrimination has consequences in everything else. We will destroy that and we will do it as soon as possible (p. 171).

October 10, 1991: I clarify that we do not have to have any political differences with believers because we are a Political Party not a religion. It is true, however, that for a time we made the Party and atheism a religion (p. 173).

May, 1985: I was able to appreciate, I always observed that the evangelical churches as a rule worked among the poorest groups of society...they were in general more congruent with their feelings and religious practices than Catholics...therefore, we did not have problems with the evangelicals; quite the opposite, in general, we always had a good and easy relationship with
them...Within the evangelical churches, there were some that because of their special characteristics had problems with the Revolution. For example the Jehovah Witnesses. But I have read that Jehovah Witnesses usually have problems everywhere (p. 65).

May, 1985: We are living now in a time of coexistence and mutual respect between the Party and the churches. With the Catholic Church we had some difficulties years ago but they were overcome. All the problems that once existed disappeared. We did not have problems with the Protestant churches and our relationships with those institutions always have been and still are excellent (p. 76).

May, 1985: By principle, I cannot agree with any kind of discrimination. Therefore, I frankly tell you that if someone asks me if there is a certain kind of subtle discrimination against Christians, I have to answer yes and that we have not overcome this situation yet. This situation is not intentional; it is not directed nor programmed. It exists and I believe we need to overcome it (p. 79).

October 22, 1995: We maintain excellent relationships with the evangelical churches; they have been excellent since the beginning of the Revolution until now! (p. 177).

On March 8, 2003 Fidel Castro gave the inauguration speech of the first Convent in Cuba of the Saint Bridget’s Holiest Savior order. Many important Catholic authorities attended the event including cardinal Crescenzio Sepe, the Pope’s envoy; cardinal Juan Sandoval, archbishop of Guadalajara, México; Luis Robes, the Cuban nuncio; and
Mother Tekla Famiglietti, abbess of the order. Some Cuban Baptist pastors were concerned that the improvement of relationships between the Cuban government and the Catholic Church would bring discrimination to the Baptist ministry (O. Dellet, personal communication, March 9, 2003). During his speech, the Cuban president expressed his admiration towards ecumenism: “I wish that this place would become an example of ecumenism. Religious beliefs and motivations of thousands of people cannot and should not be changed” (Castro Ruz, 2003, p. 4).

Education in Cuba

The Cuban Revolution values and promotes education. In the late 1950s illiteracy was 43.09% and 44.11% of the population never had the opportunity to attend school (Crahan, 1985). The Cuban government declared 1961 as the “Year of Education” and conducted a one-year-long literacy campaign. All formal schools were suspended and 271,000 teachers, mainly young people, went throughout the country to teach more than 700,000 illiterate Cubans (Martínez-Fernández et al, 2003). All teachers were organized into detachments known as the “Conrado Benitez” Brigades, in remembrance of a young teacher killed by counterrevolutionary forces (Cantón Navarro, 1998). The curriculum used in the literacy campaign served as an instrument to introduce the goals and principles of the Cuban Revolution. Martínez-Fernández et al (2003) point out the importance that education has for the Cuban government: “with an average of one teacher for every 42 inhabitants and a half-million university-trained professionals in a
nation of around 11 million, Cuba ranks among the world’s most educated nations. Literacy in 1995 was established at 96 percent” (p. 278).

Education is compulsory in Cuba until the ninth grade or what is known as secundaria básica. Irma López (personal communication, December 5, 2002) from the Cuban Pedagogical Association argues that education in Cuba is based on the following principles: (a) massiveness, quality, and equity; (b) attention to diversity without any kind of discrimination; (c) balance between centralization and decentralization; (d) balance between theory and practice; and (e) freeness of all educational activities.

In Cuba, two government offices control and direct formal education. The Ministry of Education is responsible for K-12 and universities belong to the Ministry of Higher Education. A report of the ministry of higher education explains its structure and responsibilities:

Higher education is provided by universities, higher institutes, higher pedagogical institutes, centers of higher education and higher polytechnic institutes. All institutions of higher education are public. The Ministerio de Educación Superior (MES) is responsible for policy in matters of undergraduate and postgraduate education. It controls teaching, methodology, courses and programmes and the allocation of student places, as well as the specialization courses offered by centers of higher education, which come under the control of other ministries. All institutions have the same status. (Cuba: Education System, 2001, p. 2).

On June 6, 1961 the Cuban government published a law that nationalized all educational institutions (Ramos, 1999). Since that time all education in Cuba is public,
free, and government controlled. Theological seminaries were the only learning centers allowed to function privately (Ramos, 1999). The Cuban Ministry of Higher Education does not have any jurisdiction over seminaries and, as a result, these institutions lack accreditation or academic recognition by the government (L. Veguilla, personal communication, December 11, 2002).

Recently, the Cuban regime has stressed the importance of education for all Cubans. Every day, Cuban television broadcasts a program called “University for Everyone” that covers a multitude of subjects (Eaton & Chavira, 2002). Cubans can buy a study guide for the course for only two Cuban pesos. The teachers in this program are faculty at Cuban universities. Also, the government is promoting different learning opportunities in every neighborhood in an attempt to better educate the people and prepare them to fight what Fidel Castro calls “the battle of ideas” (S. Etenza, personal communication, March 11, 2003). According to Eaton & Chavira (2002), the government has adapted one of José Martí’s famous quotes as a slogan for its educational campaign, “ser culto para ser libre” (be cultured to be free).

Although recognizing the success of the Cuban educational system, Moses (2000) believes that “education in a society that does not have the basic freedom of expression is a double-edged sword” (p. 71). She sees a problem in educating people while, at the same time, discouraging critical thinking.
Protestantism in Cuba today

The economic situation plays a major role in Cuba. Until 1989, 85% of Cuban foreign trade was dependent upon the Soviet Union. Cuba provided sugar, nickel, tobacco, rum, and citrus fruits in exchange for many products, but especially oil (J. Jacomino, personal communication, December 4, 2002). After the Soviet Union disintegrated, Cuba started facing an economic crisis. In 1990 the Cuban government initiated a series of economic measures to cope with the hard situation in Cuba known as the “Special Period.” According to the Cuban journalist Juan Jacomino (personal communication, December 4, 2002), the Cuban government took the following measures to cope with the economic situation: (a) open all areas of the economy to foreign investment with the exemption of health, education, and the military; (b) legalize the use of US dollars in 1993; (c) allow the reception of tax free remittances; (d) allow self-employment with the condition of paying taxes; (e) increase tourism to the degree that it became the primary source of income for the country; and (f) encourage the establishment of farmers’ markets.

The new economy affects daily life in Cuba. Access to US dollars divides Cubans into two groups: those living off pesos and those receiving dollars because they work in the dollar sector, receive family remittances, or have close ties with the government (Bandow, 2002; Moses, 2000). The Cuban economy is increasingly depending on American dollars and this situation is creating social inequalities among Cubans (Bandow, 2002). The exchange rate is approximately 28 Cuban pesos per one U.S. dollar. Stickney (1995) encourages the need for supporting Cuban nationals to help
strengthen their economy. She suggests partnerships with Christians in Cuba in their personal enterprises.

The Cuban Revolution considers the United States’ Government to be the constant enemy. Consequently, the Cuban government blames all of Cuba's economic problems on the American embargo (Moses, 2000).

Several events started changing the relationship between the Cuban government and Christian institutions. On June 1984, the American black preacher and human activist, Jesse Jackson, visited Cuba. Jackson attended a celebration to the memory of Martin Luther King organized by some Protestant churches in Cuba (Kirk, 1989). Jackson’s visit to Cuba was an important factor in improving the relationship between the government and evangelical churches. On this occasion, Fidel Castro attended a church service in Cuba for the first time in almost twenty years (Kirk, 1989).

Guiribitey (1998) considers that after 1990 the relationship between the Cuban government and evangelical churches improved considerably. He suggests the meeting of evangelical leaders with Fidel Castro on April 2 of that year as the turning point. In that meeting Castro recognized that Protestants were discriminated against by the Revolution and promised to change the situation. In 1991, for the first time the Communist Party allowed believers the option to join the party. Two Christians were elected to the national Communist legislature: Raul Suárez, pastor of Ebenezer Baptist church in Havana and Sergio Arce, former president of the Evangelical Theological Seminary (Ham, 1999; Kennedy, 1998).
On December 13, 1997, Fidel Castro pointed out two events that helped to improve the relationship between the Cuban government and religious people: the amendment to the Cuban Constitution in 1992 that changed the government from atheistic to lay and the decision of the Congress in 1994 to allow believers to join the Communist Party (Giraldi, 1998).

Pope John Paul II visited Cuba from January 21 to 25, 1998. He offered four masses: the first one in Santa Clara, the second one in Camagüey, the third in Santiago de Cuba, and the last one at the Revolution square in Havana (Martínez-Fernández et al, 2003). Fidel Castro asked for the support and presence of all Cubans at the masses and they were broadcasted live (Giraldi, 1998). The Cuban president shares many ideals with John Paul II and for many years entertained the idea of the Pope’s visit to Cuba. In May 1985, Fidel Castro (1997) declared:

> It is necessary to acknowledge that the Pope is an outstanding politician because of his activities, his mobility, and his contact with the people. What we do as revolutionaries is being with the people, to talk to them and to share with them a message. This is what the chief of the Catholic church does...I am totally convinced that a visit from the Pope would be useful and positive for the Church, for Cuba and for the Third World in general (p. 102-105).

The official reinstatement of the Christmas celebration in Cuba served as a preamble of the Pope’s visit to this country. The Cuban Government banned all Christmas celebrations from 1962 to 1997. The Pope’s visit to Cuba helped to improve the position of Catholics in Cuban society (Kapcia, 2000). In his farewell speech, the
Pope pleaded “for Cuba to open itself to the world, and for the world to open itself up to Cuba” (Martínez-Fernández et al, 2003).

From May 30 to June 20, 1999, Protestants were allowed to have open-air services for the first time in four decades. Four of the evangelistic campaigns were broadcast on national television and many members of the Communist Party attended the services (R. Acosta, personal communication, December 7, 2002). The Cuban Bible Society printed 750,000 Bibles to be distributed during all events (“Cuba: Evangelicals Come up to Air,” 1999). Fidel Castro attended the last service in Havana along with 120,000 people. The Western Baptist Convention declined to participate in these events because it was concerned that the world would interpret these services as a sign of Cuban religious freedom (“Evangelicals Gather for a Celebration in Cuba,” 1999).

The Cuban Council of Evangelical Churches was established in 1941 (Ramos, 1989). In 1997 it changed its name to the Cuban Ecumenical Council and in 1995 the name changed again to Cuban Council of Churches (Ham, 1999). It represents part of the Protestant community before the government. It also serves as a channel for foreign humanitarian assistance (Stickney, 1995). Only 25 out of 54 Protestant denominations belong to the Cuban Council of Churches (Kennedy, 1998).

The Council of Churches is the only Protestant organization with government permission to import Bibles (Landers, 1999). An Episcopal sociologist and vice-president of the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Matanzas, Pablo Odén Marichal, serves as the current president of the Cuban Church Council (Ham, 1999). Many evangelicals perceive the Cuban Council of Churches as an organization with close ties to, and
consequently, in the service of the Cuban government (S. Entenza, personal communication, March 11, 2003; Ramos, 1989).

This organization publishes the journal *Mensaje* (Message), the most important theological journal in Cuba according to the Cuban theologian Adolfo Ham (1999). On April 2002, the Cuban Church Council launched the biblical journal *Debarim* with the economic support of the Scottish church.

Nowadays, Cuba is experiencing a spiritual revival (De la Torre, 2002; Suchlicki, 2001; Lopez Oliva, 1994). Protestant churches have grown faster than any other religion (Martínez-Fernández et al, 2003). The former president of the Western Cuba Baptist Convention and the president of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention agree that this is the best time for the evangelical church in Cuba (L. Veguilla, personal communication, December 11, 2002; R. Acosta, personal communication, December 7, 2002). Churches are growing faster than in any other time in Cuba’s history (R. Acosta, personal communication, December 7, 2002). Catholic and Protestant churches have experienced growth since the early nineties (Lopez Oliva, 1994).

Since Christians were not allowed to build new church buildings or to repair the existing ones, they started meeting in houses. The house church movement has been a vital element in the spiritual awakening in Cuba because churches seek the people where they are instead of waiting for them to come to the church building (L. Veguilla, personal communication, December 11, 2002). It is hard to know the real number of house churches in Cuba because many of them function illegally (R. Acosta, personal communication, December 7, 2002). Kennedy (1998) declared that in 1998 there were
at least 3,000 house churches while other sources claim more than 10,000 house

Alonso (2000) identifies three factors that, in his judgment, explain the religious
revival in Cuba in the last years. First, Cubans possess a religious culture that was
suppressed for decades by atheistic values. Second, the government formally eliminated
between 1991 and 1992 all political discrimination against believers. Third, the
economic crisis in Cuba motivated the people to search for the supernatural. Veguilla
(personal communication, December 11, 2002), on the other hand, declared that the
Holy Spirit is the only reason for the spiritual awakening in Cuba.

Greer (1989) points out that members of the Western Baptist Convention hold
three different positions regarding the Cuban Revolution: (a) the belief that Marxism
and Christianity are incompatible and that the church should refuse to accept Marxism;
(b) the idea that Marxism and Christianity are compatible and that the church should
participate with the government; and (c) the belief that Christians should be good
citizens and they should not oppose or endorse the communist system. Wallace (1973)
argues that all evangelical churches also present the same situation: “the people of the
churches follow one of three lines: continued silent opposition to the Revolution, total
indifference, or a recognition of the great values of the Revolution” (p. 5).

The Cuban Revolution has reshaped Cuban Protestantism. Samuel Entenza,
former president of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Seminary, believes that evangelicals are
living in a climate of religious tolerance but still lack complete religious freedom
(personal communication, March 11 2003). Nevertheless, Leoncio Veuquilla argues that
believers have learned to lose both their fear and their resentment towards the persecution coming from the Cuban Revolution (personal communication, December 11, 2002).
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Design

This study represents historical research into the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary. The study attempted to provide a comprehensive overview of this institution within the context of theological education in Cuba and the Cuban Revolution.

The historical method consists of four steps: definition of the problem or topic, data collection, data analysis to determine external and internal criticism, and data synthesis to form conclusions (Gay, 1996). This study followed this process and used numerous sources to conduct the organized search for data. Quotations, documentation and bibliography compose the three areas of most common concern in historical writing (Felt, 1976).

Documents and selected literature were the primary sources of information for this study. Oral history also provided useful information through selected interviews. Lummis (1987) defines oral evidence as “an account of first hand experience recalled retrospectively, communicated to an interviewer for historical purposes and preserved on a system of reproducible sound” (p. 27). The open interviews with authorities related to the ECBTS addressed the primary research questions of this study.

Cairns (1979) points out that “the historian must criticize the documents from which his data comes by careful inquiry or research” (p. 27). Therefore, all sources of information were tested using both internal and external criticism. Gall, Borg, & Gall,
(1996) define external criticism as “the process of determining whether the apparent or claimed origin of a historical document corresponds to its actual origin” (p. 657). Internal criticism “involves evaluating the accuracy and worth of the statements contained in a historical document” (p. 659). Triangulation was used to determine both the authenticity (external criticism) and the accuracy (internal criticism) of all sources.

Primary and secondary sources provided the information for this study. Primary sources are firsthand records produced by someone who personally experienced the historical events under study. Secondary sources are secondhand documents created by someone who was not personally present at the historical event (McMillan, 2000; Gall et al., 1996).

Limitations
As in any historical research, this study was limited by the sources used to obtain the information. History, as a human product, conveys a high degree of subjectivity even with the use of the most rigorous research methods. Also, qualitative studies pursue the search for the participant’s perspective in any given situation. Consequently, although all efforts were made to maintain objectivity in order to unveil the “true” history of ECBTS, the researcher is conscious of the limitations that historical research imposed upon this goal.

This study was limited by the lack of published research on seminaries and theological education in Cuba. This situation prevented the author from making comparisons with other similar studies. The only two written documents on the history
of ECBTS did not provide a comprehensive overview, are limited on their scope, and are presented from an insider’s perspective.

The lack of written information about the ECBTS was a limitation for this study. The institution does not publish a catalogue. The only seminary catalogue available was published in 1961. Information about the seminary presidents and faculty had to be obtained through a triangulation of different interviews and documents.

The political situation in Cuba limited this study. Cuba has had the same political regime for more than forty years. Therefore, a study of the Cuban Revolution’s impact on the institution generated some difficulties. For example, it was perceived that some pastors feared persecution if they had spoken against the government. The number of people willing to openly discuss the relationship with the Cuban government was not as large as one would have hoped for. Furthermore, the researcher was not able to have an interview with the Religious Affairs representative of the Cuban Communist Party. The researcher tried to have an interview with Caridad Bello through the Cuban organization ICAP (Cuban Institute of Friendship Among People) in December 2002 and March 2003, but he was told that she is a busy person and did not have time for the interview.

**Delimitation**

Although this study provided a general background on evangelical theological education in Cuba, the main focus was on the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary. The
purpose was to present a general historical overview of this institution within the context of the pre-Cuban and post-Cuban Revolution.

Procedures for Collecting Data

Primary Sources
The researcher made several trips to Cuba during the study. Ten trips to Cuba with at least one-week duration provided first-hand data for the research. The trips were conducted in July 2000, December 2000, May 2001, August 2001, January 2002, March 2002, June 2002, December 2002, January 2003, and March 2003. Although the main focus of this study was the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary, the researcher traveled through the whole island and visited different churches and seminaries.

Numerous interviews with people related to the seminary made available insights and information about the history and current profile of the institution. When possible, the interviews were tape recorded. The researcher interviewed the following key people: 1) Dr. Roy Acosta, President of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention; 2) Rev. Ernesto Fernandez, Acting President of the seminary; 3) Rev. Dante Sánchez, former seminary librarian, historian, and author of a small book about the history of the seminary on its fiftieth anniversary; 4) Rev. Francisco Álvarez, the Convention historian and former President of the seminary; 5) Rev. Orlando Colás, former president of the Baptist Convention; 6) Rev. Samuel Etenza, former president of the seminary; 7) Rev. Efraín Reyes, U.S. representative of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention; 8) Rev. Joel Rosales, seminary professor and pastor of the First Baptist church in Santiago; and 9)
Dr. Leoncio Veguilla, President of the Western Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary. The researcher interviewed some of these people on more than one occasion. To conduct the interviews, the researcher traveled on several occasions to the cities of Santiago, Bayamo, Holguin, Havana, and Miami, Florida.

The researcher also visited different Cuban pastors who are graduates of the seminary. The researcher spent time with many pastors during informal conversations and also visited their churches. Some of the places visited were the Baptist churches in the cities of Camagüey, Céspedes, Florida, Esmeralda, Santiago, Holguin, Ciego de Ávila, Las Tunas, Moa, Mella, Jatibonico, and Havana.

Idaldo Matos, general secretary of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention, pastor of the First Baptist church in Florida, Cuba, and seminary professor provided invaluable help to the researcher. Pastor Matos assisted the researcher in making contacts with many of the people related to the seminary and with providing resources and documents concerning the current profile of the seminary and the Baptist Convention.

The Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary library and the Baptist Convention archives were consulted during the study. ECBTS publications along with the interviews provided information on the organizational structure, faculty, student body, academic programs, theology, facilities and mission and vision of the seminary. Government publications and the Cuban Constitution were used to identify the official policy toward religious institutions.

The Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention’s official publication *El Mensajero* (The Messenger) provided information on the Convention and its relationship with the
ECBTS. *El Mensajero* started in 1904 and was published periodically until 1965 when the Cuban government hindered its distribution. *El Heraldo Oriental* (The Eastern Herald) started in 1995 replacing *El Mensajero* until 1999 when this publication started being published again (E. Reyes, personal communication, July 13, 2001).

Three authors closely related to the ECBTS presented essential information for this study. Roy Acosta (2000) gives a detailed summary of the Convention history in his book *History and Theology of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention* based on his doctoral dissertation research (1991) at San Francisco Theological Seminary. Acosta’s work provides a general background on the history of the Baptist convention. However, the history of the seminary is only touched briefly. Dante Sánchez (1999) wrote a brief history of the ECBTS celebrating its fiftieth anniversary. Sanchez’ work deals mainly with the opening of the seminary. Dante’s work deals specifically with the opening of the seminary and stops after the first seminary graduation. Lastly, Adela Mourlot (1975) provides a historical outline of the institution, especially of the graduation ceremonies. Mourlot’s work provides mainly a poetic representation of the commencement ceremonies. None of these works provide either a current profile of the seminary or a discussion of the Cuban Revolution’s impact on the institution. The research presented here attempted to complement the previous works by offering the pre- and post-revolution development of the seminary.

The researcher participated in a Cuba study tour sponsored by NAFSA (Association of International Educators) that provided a first-hand understanding of the
Cuban educational system. The tour included visits to different educational institutions and conferences with various Cuban officials in different areas of education.

Secondary sources
Although there are no studies dealing specifically with evangelical seminaries in Cuba, several works deal with religion and Protestantism, which directly relate to the research topic. A comprehensive list of sources such as books, articles, dissertations, newspapers, and documents was used as secondary sources for this study.

The researcher used different electronic resources to look for secondary sources on Christianity in Cuba: dissertation abstracts, ERIC, WorldCat, and FirstSearch. The researcher also visited many libraries to find some sources of information. Among the libraries researched were those at Dallas Theological Seminary, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Southern Methodist University, University of North Texas, and South Florida Center for Theological Studies.

The researcher also visited several bookstores throughout Cuba and México on different occasions. The Cuban government owns the bookstores and they lack religious sections. The few books published in Cuba on the topic of Christianity present an official perspective. The researcher was unable to find books dealing with theological education in Cuba and the ones found barely talked about evangelicals in Cuba. The researcher found some resources on the topic of religion at the book table of the Martin Luther King Jr. Center in Havana.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The problem of this study was the pre- and post-revolution development of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary. In chapter one of the research reported here are the research questions which guided the research. The research questions are restated and addressed in this chapter:

1) What are the historical roots and milestones of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary?

2) In what ways has the communist revolution in Cuba affected theological education?

3) What is the institution’s current situation?

4) What is current Cuban policy regarding religious institutions of theological education?

5) What can be expected if a change in the political system occurs?

The Historical Roots and Milestones of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary

José Regino O’Halloran Valdés established the First Baptist church in the eastern part of Cuba on August 31, 1898. Alberto Díaz, the pioneer of Baptist work in Cuba, baptized O’Halloran on January 28, 1886 (Sánchez, 1999). O’Halloran went to eastern Cuba as a missionary with the Southern Baptist Convention. On November 23, 1898, the Southern Baptist Convention and the North American Baptist Convention made an agreement to carry out their missionary work in Cuba. The Southern Baptist Convention decided to
work in the western Cuban provinces and the North American Baptists in the eastern
provinces and Puerto Rico.

After the Southern Baptist and North American Baptist agreement to divide Cuba
into two ministry areas, O'Halloran left the city of Santiago and moved to the western
part of the country. A few years later, O'Halloran returned to eastern Cuba with the
financial support of North American Baptists (Sánchez, 1999).

The first North American missionary, Hartwell R. Moseley, arrived in the eastern
city of Santiago de Cuba in January, 1899. Moseley played a vital role during the first
stages of the Baptist ministry in eastern Cuba (Ramos, 1989). A native of South
Carolina, he was a graduate of the Baptist seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Moseley
went to Cuba after doing previous ministry in México and served as superintendent of
North American Baptists in the Caribbean island until 1913.

The Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention (ECBC) was established on February 7,
1905. Thirteen churches formed the new Baptist association under the leadership of
Moseley. Foreign missionaries controlled the Baptist work in eastern Cuba (Acosta,
1991). Missionaries occupied three of the most important offices in the newly
established Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention: Hartwell Robert Moseley, president; David
Wilson, vice-president; and Albert Howell, treasurer. Nevertheless, Moseley had
different convictions than the rest of the Protestant missionaries in Cuba. Tschuy (2001)
points out that Moseley “was perhaps the only one of his generation who took the
plight of the rural population seriously... He insisted from the start that the Cuban
Convention de Cuba Oriental become financially self-sufficient at an early stage” (p.
For these reasons, this Baptist Convention distinguished itself from other Protestant denominations in Cuba.

The presence of American Baptist missionaries was important in the ministry of the ECBC. After Moseley’s tenure, the following people represented the American Baptist work in Cuba: Albert Howell, Daniel Wilson, Robert Routledge, Wilbur Larson, Oscar Rodríguez, and Aaron Webber. Since 1960, the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention has been operating without a superintendent of the American Baptists (Ramos, 1999).

The first attempt to provide formal training to the pastors of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention was through a one-month summer institute (Lobaina & Lorente, 1950). The Cuban Convention asked the American Baptist Home Mission Society to support this program. After some time, the institutes changed their name to Institutes for Pastors (Rosales, 1999, September/October). The intention was to make theological training available to the pastors during the month of June. Because June is the rainiest month in Cuba, it was assumed that pastors would leave their mission fields to attend the training (Lobaina & Lorente, 1950).

Along with the summer Institute, in 1905 the newly establish Eastern Convention launched a correspondence school to prepare the leaders of local churches and young people to become pastors (Lobaina & Lorente, 1950). The ECBC decided to have the same coordinator for both the correspondence school and the summer institute. The correspondence school started in April 1905 with an eight-month program (Sánchez, 1999). All church leaders without formal training were required to enroll in the correspondence courses. The curriculum used during the correspondence school was
divided into four sections. Each two-month section had six subjects. In Table 1 is the first curriculum:

Table 1
Curriculum for the Correspondence School of Theology in 1905

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Subjects:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>1. History, Geography, and Bible Chronology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Baptist's Beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Christianity (Evidences)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Sermons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Spanish Grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>1. General History and Geography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. History of Baptists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Roman Catholicism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Biblical Prophesy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Spanish Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>1. Jesus Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. The Reformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Holy Bible (Inspiration and Authenticity)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Curriculum del Curso por Correspondencia en 1905,” 1907, May

Colegios Internacionales de El Cristo

The Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention established the Colegios Internacionales de El Cristo (International Colleges in El Cristo) on February 5, 1907 although the school term began on September 9, 1907. El Cristo is a little town close to the city of Santiago de Cuba. This institution was founded with these objectives: (a) increase the moral and educational level of society, (b) prepare teachers for other Baptist institutions, (c) provide a balance to the Catholic influence in the region, and (d) provide cultural and spiritual training to the ministry leadership (F. Álvarez, personal communication, July 16, 2002).

Robert Routledge, a Canadian, was the director of the International Colleges for 31 years. He attended the Baptist University at McMaster, Toronto, the University of
Chicago, and Temple University in Philadelphia (Ortíz Columbié, 1979). Under Routledge’s leadership, the International Colleges acquired a good reputation in Cuba even though they offered affordable education. The International Colleges became one of the best schools in eastern Cuba, and, consequently, attracted many students, including the youngest sister of Fidel Castro (Betto, 1985). Figure 6 shows the campus of the International Colleges under Robert Routlege’s tenure as director of the institution.

![Campus of the International Colleges in El Cristo](image)

**Figure 6. Campus of the International Colleges in El Cristo**

The International Colleges launched a school of theology for the purpose of training pastors and missionaries. The school of theology opened in 1909 with a three-year program. The school of theology replaced the summer institute and the correspondence school of theology. The school provided its students with “a modest theological training, conservative in character, and missionary minded” (Acosta, 1991,
p. 54). Students were required to have a high school diploma in order to enter this theological program.

The first graduates from the school of theology were Máximo Montel Fragoso, Alfredo Santana Bauza, José Luis Molina Valdés, Juan Cabrera Polo, Manuel Caballería Galí, and José Rodríguez Prianes (see Figure 7).

![Figure 7. First Graduates from the School of Theology at the International Colleges. The Second Person from Left to Right is A. B. Howell, the American Baptist Superintendent, and the Third Person is Robert Routledge, the International Colleges Director.]

Since 1929, the economic crisis in Cuba has affected the International Colleges. The Cuban government also started middle schools in the main Cuban cities that competed with the Colleges. In 1934, the enrollment plummeted by 40% (Lobaina & Lorente, 1950). The school of theology faced problems finding economic resources and faculty. The economic difficulties reached a point that obligated the Colleges to close
the school of theology in 1933 due to lack of money (Deulofeo Pérez, 1989). The school of theology operated from 1909 to 1933 and during that period prepared approximately 25 pastors and missionaries (Sánchez, 1999 September/October). Although it was reopened from 1936 to 1939, the school of theology had to close permanently (Lobaina & Lorente, 1950). The campus of the International Colleges was nationalized in 1962 and became a government-owned mineral institute.

After the closing of the school of theology at the International Colleges in El Cristo, the ECBC looked for different ways to train its pastors and leaders. One option was the Interdenominational Seminary in Puerto Rico. However, as Tschuy (2001) points out, the ECBC disregarded this possibility because “it feared that the seminary’s urban and middle class atmosphere would have a negative effect on its students” (p. 254). Therefore, Los Pinos Nuevos Seminary became the best option for Eastern Baptists. In fact, some people who lacked the secular training required to study at the International Colleges had attended Los Pinos Nuevos Seminary even before the Colleges closed its school of theology.

Nevertheless, at the end of the 1930’s the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention changed its relationship with Los Pinos Nuevos and urged all its churches to stop sending students to that institution (Acosta, 1991). Theological and ministerial differences between the ECBC and Los Pinos Nuevos created a precarious relationship. Los Pinos Nuevos seminary was considered more fundamentalist than Eastern Baptists (E. Reyes, personal communication, July 16, 2002). The ECBC leaders had more ecumenical and moderate theological convictions and thus reacted against what they
considered to be the fundamentalist and dispensationalist extremes of the Placetas Seminary. This situation influenced many of the ECBC young people to “an extent that it could even threaten the integrity of the church” (Acosta, 1991, p. 159). Also, the ECBC considered that many graduates of Los Pinos Nuevos were interfering with its ministry in eastern Cuba.

During the early 1940s, the ECBC undertook two more possibilities for providing theological training to its pastors, but without much success. In 1941 the Baptist Convention asked all who were interested in becoming pastors to take correspondence courses offered by the Spanish American Baptist Seminary in Los Angeles, California instead of attending Los Pinos Nuevos seminary (Sánchez, 1999). This seminary belonged to the American Baptists and operated from 1921 to 1964 when it had to close due to economic difficulties. Although some people took these courses, the correspondence school failed to meet the needs of the ECBC. In addition to the correspondence program, Wilbur Larson attempted to establish a missionary school to train farmers. Larson, who replaced Routledge as the American Baptist superintendent in Cuba, had the intention of preparing the future pastors of the ECBC while they remained working on agricultural activities. However, this project did not succeed because of inefficient support from eastern Baptists (Lobaina, 1980).

The establishment of the Evangelical Theological Seminary in 1946 opened a new door for the theological training needed at the ECBC. This interdenominational seminary in the western Cuban city of Matanzas had the initial approval of the ECBC. Two eastern Baptist leaders, Marino Santos and Santiago Entenza, went to study at the Evangelical
Theological Seminary in Matanzas. North American Baptists and the ECBC sponsored the studies of Santos and Entenza. However, the geographical distance between the city of Matanzas and the eastern part of Cuba, along with doctrinal differences, made it difficult for the Baptist Convention to consider the Evangelical Theological Seminary as its own seminary (Acosta, 1991).

Origins and Funding of the Seminary
At the end of the 1940s the growth of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention increased the necessity to train more pastors and church leaders. In 1947 the ECBC had 69 churches with a total membership of 3,650 (Deulofeo Pérez, 1986). Oscar Rodríguez, the American Baptist superintendent, was in favor of sending students to the seminary in Matanzas instead of establishing a new institution. However, the ECBC leadership as a whole considered it important for the convention to have its own seminary in order to maintain the Baptist identity and to conform to the Eastern Cuba Baptist mentality (Sánchez, 1999 September/October).

In 1948, the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention appointed a committee to evaluate the possibility of starting a seminary. The members of this group were Mario Casanella, Agustín González, Pedro Abella, Francisco Sabas, José Serra, Victor Lobaina, and Oscar Rodríguez (Acosta, 2000). The committee concluded that the Baptist Convention should start a seminary for these reasons:

1. The scarcity of Baptist workers to maintain what had been accomplished and the possibility of enlarging the work of the Convention;
2. The need for a seminary that conformed to the principles and practices of Baptists and that would serve the spiritual interests of the Baptist churches;
3. The certainty that no other seminary could satisfy the needs of the work of the Convention; because of the distance and because their theology did not fit those sustained by Convention churches;
4. The money that had to be invested in preparing young people in other seminaries could be invested in the creation of a seminary;
5. By having young men and women in their own seminary, it would be possible that during their studies they could help the nearby churches and, thus, be in contact with Baptist pastors and churches. Also, upon graduation, they would not be strangers to the Convention; and
6. Having a seminary properly organized would serve as a constant calling to young men and women in churches to dedicate their lives to Christian ministry (Acosta, 1991).

Sánchez (1999) mentions the constant prayer of Paquita Arias as an important preamble to the creation of the Baptist seminary. Arias prayed every morning for a seminary to train future pastors. Her desire was that her son would be one of them. Paquita Arias’ son, Eliseo González, was a member of the first graduating class and was pastor of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention for many years.

Adela Mourlot, Luz Gómez, and Gloria Arenado promoted a special offering to support the founding of the seminary. They asked every Baptist to give one cent per day to create a fund for the seminary. They believed that with $3.65 Cuban pesos every
person would give per year the Baptist convention could have its own seminary. This amount of money “was obviously not enough, but it was the starting point that created the momentum to establish the theological institution” (O. Colás, personal communication, August 24, 2002). The campaign to raise the necessary funds for the seminary was named “The one cent transforming brigade.” Adela Mourlot (1975) chose the term “transforming” for this campaign because a seminary trains people for missions and the goal of missions is to transform people. This brigade also sponsored the two students who attended the seminary in Matanzas. Every October 10, the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention raises money to continue supporting the seminary.

The Eastern Baptist Convention determined that they could afford the founding of a new seminary because they relied on three different kinds of resources: spiritual, human, and economic (Lobaina, 1980). Spiritual resources were prayers expecting the blessing of God. Human resources included a group of students ready to attend the seminary and faculty willing to teach without receiving financial compensation. Economic resources were the approximately 3,000 Cuban pesos that could be raised by the transforming brigade.

Seminary Rectors

The Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary uses the term “rector” to describe the position of chief executive officer or seminary president. The school has had eleven rectors throughout its history. Table 2 lists the names of the ECBTS rectors.
Table 2
Rectors at the ECBTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Francisco Sabás</td>
<td>1949-1949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oscar Rodríguez</td>
<td>1950-1958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolfo Ham</td>
<td>1959-1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marino Santos</td>
<td>1965-1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pascual Lorente</td>
<td>1966-1968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gelasio Ortíz</td>
<td>1968-1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roy Acosta</td>
<td>1979-1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel Entenza</td>
<td>1982-1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francisco Álvarez</td>
<td>1993-1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodolfo Rodríguez</td>
<td>1999-2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miguel R. Pantoja</td>
<td>Fall 2003-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Francisco Sabás (1949-1949).* In 1949, Francisco Sabás became the first rector of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary (ECBTS). Francisco Sabás had a doctorate in education and a degree in pharmacy. He taught physics and chemistry at a local high school and at the International Colleges of El Cristo. Sabás was a prominent leader of the ECBC, a major promoter of the seminary, and a great painter. Sabás’ tenure at the ECBTS was short. He resigned from his office as seminary rector on
December 7, 1949 due to health problems (Lobaina & Lorente, 1950). On May 20, 1952, the Cuban government gave him the Carlos Manuel de Céspedes Medal. This award, the most important in Cuba, was in recognition of Sabás’ work in education and his contributions to Cuban society. The Cuban president at that time, Fulgencio Batista, signed the award.

The Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary started on October 10, 1949 with ten students, six men and four women. October 10 was chosen as the date to begin the seminary because of its historical relevance in Cuban history (Lobaina, 1980). On October 10, 1868, the Cuban hero Carlos Manuel de Céspedes started the independence war against Spain. Francisco Sabás declared during the opening ceremony that this institution would attempt to polish the students, not just to varnish them (Rosales, 1999). Sabás was convinced that theological training had the potential to change the students’ lives so they could minister more effectively.

The city of Santiago was chosen as the place to start the seminary because this city had certain advantages: 1) the University of Oriente, 2) a variety of cultural centers, and 3) the possibility of drawing experienced pastors from different locations (Lobaina & Lorente, 1950).

The seminary used the classrooms of the Martí Institute that was operating on the campus of the First Baptist Church in Santiago. The Martí Institute had been established in 1900 and was the oldest evangelical school in Cuba (J. Rosales, personal communication, July 15, 2002).
The ECBTS established a four-year program with a curriculum following a tri-monthly structure. The seminary had three different departments: theology, Bible, and lay training. José Serra, a faculty member, gave the seminary all his books including the bookshelves to establish the first library (D. Sánchez, personal communication, March 10, 2003). This seminary successfully fulfilled “the pastoral needs of Eastern Cuba” (Acosta, 1991, p. 63).

The ECBTS adopted the phrase “And you will be my witnesses” from Acts 1:8 as its motto. The Mission Board of the North American Baptist agreed to donate $1,000 annually to help with the support of the seminary (Sánchez, 1999).

People involved with the creation and operation of the new seminary offered their services without receiving monetary reimbursement (Acosta, 2000). The Seminary Board members were Victor Lobaina, Juan Carmona, Oscar Rodríguez, José Serra, José Luis Molina, Adela Mourlot, Rafael Gregorich, and Pedro Abella. Leaders of the ECBC comprised the seminary faculty. Some of the faculty members were graduates of the International Colleges at El Cristo and some American Baptist missionaries.

Table 3 lists the first seminary faculty members in 1949 and the subjects they taught.

Table 3
First Seminary Faculty Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Subject(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Francisco Sabás</td>
<td>Spiritual Life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Table 4, the first administrative staff at the ECBTS is presented. The executive board of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention appointed all seminary officers. These people worked at the seminary voluntarily.

Table 4
First Administrative Staff of the Seminary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Francisco Sabás</td>
<td>Rector</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Since the beginning of the institution, the seminary has named a female director in residence commonly known as “mother in charge.” This person provides support and direction to all seminary students. The first person to serve in this position was Carolina Dulce. The seminary has had the following people working as mother in charge: Amalia Naranjo, Juanita Barrios, Flora Terrero, Nelly Rosales, Edith Jones, Herlinda Mayeta, Sotera Sánchez, Teresa Abella, Elizabeth Romero, Ondina Rosa Alarcón, Noemí Percebal Elías, Dorcas Bernal, and Diamela Casaus.

**Oscar Rodríguez (1950-1958).** Oscar Rodríguez went to Cuba in 1948 as superintendent of the American Baptist work in Cuba. A Puerto Rican, Rodríguez had a bachelor of theology degree from Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, a master’s in Christian education from the Evangelical Seminary in Puerto Rico, and a doctorate in education from Columbia University in New York (Lobaina, 1980). He lived for a time in Detroit, Michigan, where he worked as a mechanic at the Ford Motor Company (D. Sánchez, personal communication, March 10, 2003).
After the resignation of Francisco Sabás in 1949, Oscar Rodríguez became the second seminary rector. Rodríguez was a dynamic leader who defined the academic structure of the seminary. He was the most ecumenical of all general missionaries who served in Eastern Cuba (Acosta, 1991). Dante Sánchez, a historian within the ECBC, defined Rodríguez as a man with “an ecumenical spirit” (personal communication, March 10, 2003).

In 1951, the seminary board decided to move the institution’s location outside of Santiago to a more appropriate campus. In this way students could have the opportunity to exercise and practice agricultural activities (Sánchez, 1999). The Baptist Convention bought a property with an area of 20,000 square meters outside Santiago, at 13 ½ kilometers of the main highway to Havana. The owner of the property, Angel Robles, decided to sell it to the seminary at a price of 9,000 Cuban pesos even though another person offered him 13,000 Cuban pesos (Sánchez, 1999). Since 1951, the ECBTS campus has been located at the same place.

The seminary faced a major problem in 1952 due to lack of water. A long drought made it very difficult for the institution to continue operating. Faculty and students worked hard to dig a well to find water, but without success (O. Colás, personal communication, August 24, 2002). Agustin González, the seminary administrator, asked for help from a friend who had the equipment required for digging wells. The seminary lacked the money necessary to pay this person for his work, but the administrator hired him hoping that God somehow would provide the resources. When the water was found and the job was finished, the person in charge of digging
the well charged nothing for his service. He decided to donate his work as an offering for the seminary (Mourlot, 1975). This situation encouraged everybody at the seminary because they experienced God’s provision through this person even though he was not a believer (O. Colás, personal communication, August 24, 2002).

The first seminary graduation was celebrated at the First Baptist church in Santiago de Cuba on October 10, 1953. Seven graduates, five men and two women, formed the first graduating class of the institution (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. First graduates of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary. From Left to Right: Félix Labrada, Juan Pablo Tamayo, Orlando Colás, Adolfo Ham, Eliseo González, María Cristina Martínez, and Herlinda Mayeta

After their graduation these people immediately started working as pastors or leaders of Eastern Baptists churches. Two of the graduates occupied important positions in the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention: Adolfo Ham, rector of the ECBTS, and
Orlando Colás, president of the convention. Also, the seminary board decided to award a Bachelor in Divinity to five faculty members: Augusto César Abella Oliveros, José Mario Casanella Aranda, Agustín González Seisdedos, Pedro Abella Oliveros, and Victor Lobaina Gell. Alfonso Rodríguez, president of the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Matanzas, gave the commencement speech.

During the frequent travels of Oscar Rodríguez outside of Cuba, José Luis Molina assumed the role as rector of the seminary. In 1954, the seminary faculty made up of Oscar Rodríguez, Adolfo Ham, Augusto Abella, Godival Gómez, Mario Casanella, Pedro Abella, Victor Lobaina, Julia Rodríguez, Kathleen Rounds, Santiago Entenza, María Rodríguez, Agustín González, and Eliseo González (Acosta, 1991). All were leaders of the ECBC. Four were graduates of the seminary’s first generation. In general, besides Oscar Rodríguez and later on Adolfo Ham, the academic qualifications of the seminary faculty were minimal.

In 1958, during the revolutionary struggle to overthrow Batista, the main highway to Santiago was closed. The seminary had to close for a few months because the political situation was dangerous and the roads were closed (D. Sánchez, personal communication, March 10, 2003). After the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, the seminary resumed its activities.

Oscar Rodriguez, as the general missionary of the ECBC, urged all pastors and churches to refrain from participating in the revolutionary conflict against Batista. The apolitical attitude of Rodriguez created discomfort among many people who supported
the Cuban Revolution. As a result of this tension, Rodríguez left Cuba in August, 1958 (Acosta, 1991).

_Adolfo Ham Reyes (1959-1964)._ A graduate of the first seminary graduating class, Adolfo Ham, became the third rector of the school in 1959. Adolfo Ham studied philosophy at the University of Oriente in Santiago while a student at the seminary. He became professor of the school a few years later. Although young for being the seminary rector, Ham had a brilliant mind besides being “the favorite student of Oscar Rodríguez and his wife Julia” (J. Rosales, personal communication, July 15, 2002). Ham holds a doctorate in Philosophy and Literature from the University of Cuba and became the most prominent intellectual figure in the ECBC (D. Sánchez, personal communication, March 10, 2003). Before becoming the seminary rector, Ham studied at the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland.

As a result of the political problems in Cuba, the number of students diminished at the ECBTS. In 1959, a special commission from the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention suggested that the seminary faculty lower prospective students’ required academic standards for one year to increase enrollment due to the immediate need of pastors (Acosta, 1991). The seminary attempted to have no fewer than 10 students with a program no longer than two years (Deulofeo Pérez, 1986). Nevertheless, only six new students began their seminary studies as members of the “special class.”

The ECBC intended to hire three full-time professors for the seminary in 1959. Also they wanted to enlarge the campus to have no fewer than fifty students (Deulofeo
Pérez, 1986). Although the ECBC failed to accomplish these goals, they represented Ham’s efforts to improve both the quality and quantity of the seminary faculty and student body. During Ham’s tenure the seminary printed a catalogue for the first time in its history. The seminary has not been able to publish another catalogue even to the present time. In 1961, the ECBTS had a library of 3,000 books (Catálogo, 1961).

Even with all the political problems, in 1959, the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention was the most autonomous of all Christian denominations. Therefore, it was the denomination that suffered the least from the exodus of pastors and missionaries after the Cuban revolution (Ham, 1986). In 1962, the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention decided to sever all economic ties with the American Baptist Convention because the ECBC leadership considered it more appropriate for Cubans to be financially independent from the American Baptists (F. Álvarez, personal communication, August 22, 2001). Before that decision, the seminary had received 1,600 US dollars every year from the American Baptist Home Mission society.

The seminary also sponsored a lay leadership program. The courses lasted one month with a five-year duration. The convention considered the lay ministry as a very important aspect of church life (Deulofeo Pérez, 1986).

Augustín González, a Spanish-born pastor, died in an airplane accident on March 27, 1962. He was at that time the treasurer of the Baptist convention and in charge of administrative affairs at the seminary (Acosta, 1991). González and his wife, Adela Mourlot, played an important role in the seminary life since its foundation.
After the overthrow of the Batista government and the beginning of the communist regime under Fidel Castro in the 60s, the seminary began to experience the effects of not receiving foreign support. Also, obtaining Bibles and Christian materials became very difficult because the Cuban government imposed restrictions on their importation. The seminary has the tradition of giving a Bible to each graduate during the commencement ceremonies. Nevertheless, during the fifth seminary graduation in 1964, graduates received only a “symbolic” Bible as a present because of the scarcity of Bibles at that time (Mourlot, 1975). The graduating class of 1964, however, was the largest until that time. A group of 15 men and 8 women helped with the revitalization of the pastoral body (Acosta, 1991).

The Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention always tried to maintain ecumenical relations with the evangelical denominations in Cuba. Consequently, the ECBC joined the Cuban Council of Evangelical Churches in 1942 (Lobaina & Lorente, 1950). In 1965, Adolfo Ham became the Executive secretary of the Cuban Council of Churches and resigned from his position as the ECBTS rector. This situation, which was considered an honor at the beginning, developed into an internal conflict with the ECBC. As a result of the tense political situation in Cuba, the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention withdrew its membership from the Cuban Council of Churches in 1968. Many in the Convention believed that the Council “had become increasingly polarized and identified the organization with pro-government positions including open support for the revolutionary socio-economic project” (Acosta, 1991, p. 138). Some pastors disapproved of this situation and resigned from their churches. The Eastern Baptist Convention denied
permission to Adolfo Ham to continue as Executive Director of the Cuban Council of Churches (Acosta, 1991).

Nevertheless, Ham decided to stay in Havana to cooperate with the Cuban Council of Churches. Ham was, therefore, separated from the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention because he was considered “liberal” during the ideological struggle of the sixties (F. Álvarez, personal communication, August 22, 2001). Ham became a Presbyterian pastor and professor at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Matanzas.

Marino Santos (1965-1966). After the graduation of the fifth seminary class, Adolfo Ham went to Havana with the permission of the Convention and Marino Santos became the seminary rector. Santos served as the rector from January 1965 to August 1966. Marino Santos graduated from the Seminary in Matanzas with a Bachelor of Theology degree in June 1950 (Acosta, 1991). He returned to eastern Cuba to work as a pastor and a seminary professor. Santos served as a pastor of the eastern Baptist churches of Palmarón, Nibujón, Ciego de Ávila, and Caimanera.

Juan Pablo Tamayo was the most popular professor at the seminary when Santos assumed the seminary rectorate. Tamayo taught hermeneutics and impressed professors and students alike with his brilliant mind (D. Sánchez, personal communication, March 10, 2003). Tamayo received a Bachelor of theology degree from the ECBTS in 1953 during the first graduation ceremony. A great speaker, Tamayo was considered a self-taught scholar with deep capability for judgment and analysis that
amazed those who had the opportunity to pursue formal studies at different institutions (S. Entenza, personal communication, March 11, 2003).

Juan Pablo Tamayo established the Movimiento Social Cristiano (Christian Social Movement), with the help of a Methodist pastor, Manuel Viera Bernal. According to Ham (1999), this was the only “serious” evangelical movement trying to cope with the religious situation during the Cuban revolution struggle. This Movement disseminated a document titled “Declaración de Principios: Mensaje a los Protestantes Cubanos” (Declaration of Principles: A Message to Cuban Protestants). In this document both capitalism and communism were rejected and all Protestants were encouraged to pursue a Christian social order and total democracy (Ham, 1999). The Cuban Council of Evangelical Churches adopted this declaration in November 1960.

During Santos’s tenure as rector, the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention and the seminary lost two important leaders—Juan Pablo Tamayo and Mario Casanella. Tamayo went to study at the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, but he never returned to Cuba. At the present time he lives in the United States (D. Sánchez, personal communication, March 10, 2003). Deulofeo Pérez (1986) believes that Tamayo and another pastor, Bernardino Martínez, went to study oversees only as an excuse to leave Cuba. Mario Casanella left the country in 1965, leaving a leadership hole in the Convention (Acosta, 1991). He went to the United States to visit his son who was sick and remained there (Deulofeo Pérez, 1986). The good news for the seminary during this time was that Augusto Abella, having attended the United Seminary of Theology in Río Piedras, Puerto Rico, returned to teach at the ECBTS.
The political situation in Cuba was unfavorable for religious institutions during the mid-sixties. The government closed the Baptist Convention offices for 68 days, from December 21, 1965 to March 1966. Deulofeo Pérez (1986) points out that Marino Santos told the members of the convention, “We can say today that the Lord is testing His people in Cuba” (p. 39).

Marino Santos was the president of the seminary when Orlando Colás, the president of the Convention, was forced by the Cuban government to work at the Military Units to Aid Production (UMAP) in 1965. The Board of Directors of the Convention appointed Santos as the new Executive Secretary in an emergency meeting (Acosta, 1991). Santos resigned as seminary rector to assume his new responsibilities within the ECBC.

*Pascual Lorente (1966-1968).* In 1966, Pascual Lorente became the seminary rector after Marino Santos was promoted to the position of Executive Secretary of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention. Before assuming the rectorate, Lorente had served previously as the vice-rector. Lorente established the Colegio Salem in the town of Cueto, in the Holguin province, where he also was the pastor of the Baptist church. An educator, Lorente contributed to organizing the seminary structure. Although he had a doctorate in Pedagogy from the University of Havana, Lorente was not a good teacher (S. Entenza, personal communication, March 11, 2003). Lorente was also a graduate of the school of theology at the International Colleges in El Cristo.
Lorente played an important role during the special seminary program to train women when all male students were recruited to work on “special military service” called Military Units to Aid Production. Lorente’s rectorate took place during a very difficult time for the church in Cuba. It was a time of transition and difficulties. For example, the seminary started the school year in 1967 even though many students and some teachers were still working at the UMAP. The seminary enrollment started to decline during the 1960s and 1970s to the lowest points in the seminary history. These years became the worst time for the institution (R. Acosta, personal communication, December 7, 2002).

*Gelasio Ortíz (1968-1978).* Gelasio Ortíz was installed as the new seminary rector on September 1, 1968 during the seminary opening ceremony for the new school year. Ortíz received a bachelor’s degree from the ECBT on August 12, 1968, shortly before his installation as rector, in part because he had no formal theological training. A member of the first faculty of the seminary, he taught at the school for 33 years. Gelasio Ortíz holds a doctorate in Pedagogy from the University of Havana. His leadership brought stability and direction to the institution.

The seminary faculty in 1968 was composed of these individuals: Marino Santos, Héctor Hernández, Ondina Maristany, Ondina Rosa Alarcón, Pedro Abella, Dante Sánchez, Herlinda Mayeta, Rogelita Alemany, Amarilis González, Orlando González, Juan Entenza, Moraima Guash, and Gelasio Ortíz (Mourlot, 1975). With the exception of Ondina Maristany, who attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort
Worth, Texas, the seminary faculty lacked academic credentials from other seminaries apart from the same institution. During the opening ceremony for the 1970-1971 academic year, Pedro Abella received a diploma for being a faithful faculty member since the beginning of the seminary and having taught for thirty years.

Dante Sánchez has been an important figure within the ECBTS and the ECBC. He graduated from the ECBTS in 1957 and served as professor of the seminary for many years. Sánchez also has occupied the positions of secretary of the ECBC, seminary librarian, and pastor of Eastern Baptist churches in Campechuela, Media Luna, Palma Soriano, and Florida. A member of the history department of the convention, Sánchez has become in recent years the unofficial historian of the seminary. Sánchez became a Baptist through the ministry of Pedro Abella (Mourlot, 1975).

During Ortíz’s tenure as rector, the seminary launched a special program in Sacred Music. Noemí Ramos, Otilia Legra, and Irma Herrera were the first graduates of this program (Mourlot, 1975). Moraima Guasch, a lay leader in the ECBC, also led an extension program in music called “Music Ministry.”

In October 1967, Héctor Hernández became the seminary administrator and chaplain. He moved to live on the seminary campus. The full-time presence of Hernández and his wife at the seminary brought more control to the institution. They spent most of their time nurturing the spiritual lives of the students (Mourlot, 1975). Hernández once avoided the closing of the seminary during a time when the government expressed some hostility to the institution (F. Álvarez, personal communication, August 22, 2001). Although some soldiers removed the seminary sign,
Hernández refused to leave the institution and confronted the Cuban authorities who, after seeing his determination, stopped their attempts at closing the seminary.

In 1972, the Cuban government stopped providing food to the seminary through the traditional food system. Flora Ferrero, an active church member, organized a special offering among Baptist churches to support the institution (D. Sánchez, personal communication, March 10, 2003). Since that time, Eastern Baptists have continued providing food offerings to support the seminary.


Roy Acosta (1979-1982). Roy Acosta, a prominent figure in the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention, became the seminary rector in 1978. Acosta has occupied different leadership positions at the ECBC and is currently its president. A graduate from the ECBC, Acosta has earned three more degrees and had the opportunity to study outside Cuba. He has a licenciatura in History from the Eastern University in Cuba. In 1980, Acosta went to Costa Rica to attend the Latin American Biblical Seminary with a scholarship from the American Baptists (Acosta, 1991). In Costa Rica he received another licenciatura, this time in Theology. Also in the late 1980s, the American Baptists made it possible for Acosta to attend San Francisco Theological Seminary in San Anselmo, California, where he obtained his doctorate in ministry (D.Min.). Acosta is
Acosta was first employed at the seminary in 1971 as resident professor, administrator, and chaplain. He has been the pastor of churches in Manzanillo and the Fourth Baptist church in Santiago de Cuba. Juan Entenza served as vice-rector during Acosta’s tenure as seminary rector.

Acosta had to leave his position as seminary rector because he wanted to reside in Santiago and the Baptist Convention decided to prohibit him from doing so (D. Sánchez, personal communication, March 10, 2003). Ironically, Acosta’s successor lived in the city of Santiago all the time and never relocated to be near the seminary. Even though Acosta is currently the president of the ECBC, Dante Sánchez, an alumnus of the seminary’s third graduation class who has been involved in the seminary life almost from the beginning, believes that Acosta is the right person to occupy the position of seminary rector (personal communication, March 10, 2003).

**Samuel Entenza (1982-1993).** The Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention named Samuel Entenza as the seminary rector on May 23, 1982. Entenza’s parents influenced his decision to attend the ECBTS and dedicate his life to Christian ministry. His father, a graduate of Los Pinos Nuevos seminary, was a pastor and his mother a teacher at the International Colleges at El Cristo (S. Entenza, personal communication, March 11, 2003).
An autodidact in many areas, Entenza excelled as seminary professor and president because of his intelligence and sharpness (D. Sánchez, personal communication, March 10, 2003). Entenza taught theology at the seminary for many years. Samuel Entenza promoted a special offering to remodel the seminary for the first time in decades. The offering was called “The 40th anniversary.”

In March 1993, he was accused of making sexual advances toward a girl at his church. Many young women also made the same accusations. He was forced to leave both his work as a pastor of the First Baptist Church in Santiago and the seminary presidency (D. Sánchez, personal communication, March 10, 2003). After these problems, Entenza was restored, though without the possibility of serving as an ECBC pastor (F. Álvarez, personal communication, August 22, 2001). At the present time Entenza coordinates evangelistic campaigns and special theological courses at different Eastern Baptist churches (S. Entenza, personal communication, March 11, 2003).

When Entenza left the seminary, Álvio González, the vice-rector, became interim rector. Entenza left a big void in the seminary and some people consider him as the last good seminary rector (D. Sánchez, personal communication, March 10, 2003).

In 1992, Entenza spent two months at the International Baptist Seminary in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where he studied Greek and Hebrew.

Francisco Álvarez (1993-1999). A graduate of Los Pinos Nuevos Seminary in 1960, Francisco Álvarez began his tenure as the ECBTS rector on October 2, 1993 and
finished it on June 21, 1998. Álvarez has been for many years president of the History department at the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention.

He was interested in promoting agricultural activities for seminary students. Álvarez attempted to follow the model of Los Pinos Nuevos Seminary, where the students are prepared to work in an agricultural society (personal communication, August 22, 2001). However, not everybody agreed with his ideas, and he was regarded as a rather non-academic rector (D. Sánchez, personal communication, March 10, 2003).

The seminary had 34 students in 1995. This was the largest group in the seminary’s history. The same year the seminary started an extension site to train lay leaders in the eastern city of Moa. The teachers were seminary faculty and pastors of that region. In 1996 the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention board decided not to accept women at the seminary for the following school year (Acosta García, 1997, March). This decision was made with the intention of meeting the need for male pastors in the ECBC.

In 1998 the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention made an agreement with the International Mission Board of the Brazilian Baptist Convention. This arrangement made possible the establishment of the Villa Teresita campus in the town of Céspedes in the central part of Cuba. This is the place of study for first-year students of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary. The Brazilian Convention agreed to send money and occasionally faculty support for the Villa Teresita campus (Acosta García, 1998, March). This new campus helps the ministry of the churches in the central part of Cuba because the seminary students do ministry in those churches during the weekends. Also, the use
of the Villa Teresita facilities allows the possibility of an increase in the seminary enrollment. The central part of Cuba demonstrates the slowest growth in the Eastern Baptist Convention (R. Acosta, personal communication December 7, 2002). The Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention bought the Villa Teresita facilities on February 27, 1957, with a monetary gift from the American Baptist Home Mission Society (“Villa Teresita,” 1996).

Rodolfo Rodríguez (1999-2002). In 1999, the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention board decided to remove Francisco Álvarez as the seminary rector because of his age. They appointed Rodolfo Rodríguez as the new rector (Acosta, 1999, August). Rodríguez was the pastor of the Third Baptist Church in Santiago, seminary professor, and the Convention treasurer when he assumed the rectorate.

Since 1999, the Chilean Missionary Association, Adelfos, has cooperated with the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention in the areas of evangelism and missions. This organization made it possible for some Cubans to go to Chile to study at the Baptist Seminary in Santiago. The Cubans studying in Chile are Orlando Dubois, Mahenry Dubois, and Maikel Valdés (Acosta, 2002, March/April). Also, this organization has agreed to periodically send professors to teach special courses at the ECBTS (Prieto, 2000).

Carlos Villa, the president of the International Theological Baptist Seminary in Buenos Aires, Argentina, visited the Cuban seminary in 2000. Also David Castro, professor of the seminary in Argentina, visited Cuba and taught a special course in
biblical Greek. Since that time, the seminary in Argentina and the ECBTS have developed a partnership. Four Cubans have been able to attend the seminary in Buenos Aires. Miguel Ángel Vázquez studied Christian education at that institution, and three pastors—David Deulofeo Ojeda, Franklin Pasos Martínez, César Joel Pérez Oliveros—are currently pursuing graduate degrees in Argentina (Memoria Anual, 2003).

During the rectorate of Rodríguez, the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary also established good relations with the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. This Brazilian institution offered scholarships to Cuban pastors and seminary professors to study at the school. In 1999, Osbel Gutiérrez went to Brazil to pursue a graduate degree in theology. He returned to Cuba in 2002 and is currently teaching at the seminary and pastoring a church in Santiago de Cuba. Ernesto Fernández, the president of the Ministerial Commission at the ECBC, believes that Gutiérrez is the appropriate person to serve as the seminary rector (personal communication, December 9, 2002). Another graduate of the ECBTS, John Alba Silot, is currently studying at the Baptist Seminary in Brazil.

In 1999, the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention and its seminary received two important book donations from American organizations. The Southern Baptist Convention made a contribution of 1,000 books to the seminary library. The ECBC received special permission from the Cuban government to receive the book donations. Also, Josh McDowell gave 10,000 sets of his books to Cuban pastors and leaders (Prieto, 2000). McDowell was able to give his books through the Cuban Council of Churches.
In 1949, Helen Black, an American missionary, established a camp known as “Mi Campamento” in the town of Manajabo, Placetas, in the central part of Cuba. She worked independently of the ECBC until 1970 when she decided to affiliate with the Eastern Baptist Convention. Black decided to stay and work in Cuba after the Cuban revolution and spent more than 55 years in that country. She taught Revelation and Daniel at the ECBTS for many years (D. Sánchez, personal communication, March 10, 2003). In 1999, the Baptist Convention assumed control of Mi Campamento and is considering using the site to organize retreats and different educational activities (I. Matos, personal communication, March 9, 2003). Black died in Cuba on April 3, 2003, at 84 years of age.

In 2000, the seminary enrollment grew to 74 students. Ernesto Fernandez also moved to the seminary campus in Santiago to serve as chaplain. The seminary has had five full-time chaplains during its history: Héctor Hernández, Roy Acosta, Rafael Mustelier, Ernesto Fernández, and Eduardo Roig.

The Cuban pastor Ramón Rodríguez married Susan Hegarty, an American missionary with the American Baptist Convention. She taught composition at the seminary. Hergarty, a native of North Carolina, lives in Cuba periodically and teaches at the seminary.

For the first time in its history, the seminary graduated two foreign students, a Ukrainian and an Ethiopian in 2002. The Ethiopian went to Cuba to study medicine and became a Christian there and decided to attend seminary.
Rodríguez resigned from his position as rector in 2002. He was accused of sexual immorality, although no definitive proof was presented against him. Acosta (personal communication, December 7, 2002) says he decided to leave for personal reasons and to return to be a full-time pastor. Pastor Rosales (personal communication, July 15, 2002) considers that the seminary is facing a crisis due to lack of vision and leadership.

*Miguel R. Pantoja (Fall 2003-).* Miguel R. Pantoja accepted the position as seminary rector in May, 2003. After Rodríguez’s resignation, the seminary operated without a rector for a year and-a-half. Pantoja is a graduate of the ECBTS and is currently pastor of the eastern Baptist church in Majagua. The Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention is trying to find a house in the city of Santiago de Cuba for Miguel R. Pantoja and his family. He is expected to be installed as the seminary rector in fall 2003 at the beginning of the school year (L. Matos, personal communication, June 1, 2003).

Ways the Communist Revolution in Cuba Has Affected Theological Education

Exodus of Pastors and Foreign Missionaries

A tragic consequence of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 was the mass exodus of the clergy. During the first half of the 1960s “about 70 percent of all Catholic priests, 90 percent of the nuns, some Protestant clergy, and all rabbis left the country either voluntarily, under social pressure, or through deportation” (Martínez-Fernández et al., 2003, p. 525). Currently, there are about five-hundred practicing Jews in Cuba (Ramos,
Many religious leaders voluntarily left the country after the Bay of Pigs invasion and the adherence to communism by the government (Kirk, 1989). Only 2,300 Jews of the 12,000 who lived in Cuba in 1960 remained in the country in 1965 (Ramos, 1989). Crahan (1985) reports that the Catholic Church lost an important presence with the departure of its ministers: “in 1960 there were 763 priests in Cuba, in 1965, 220 remained, and in 1980, only 213” (p. 322). In September 1961, the Cuban government expelled more than a hundred Catholic priests along with an auxiliary bishop (Ramos, 1989).

Protestant denominations also lost a significant number of pastors who left Cuba in the 1960s. Those Christian denominations in Cuba with close ties to the United States struggled the most to work in a socialist environment. The Cuban Methodist Conference lost ninety percent of its clergy, the Presbyterians two thirds of its ministers (Ramos, 1989). Cuban pastors left their country in “unbelievable numbers” (Ramos, 1989, p. 72). This exodus of pastors became the most important problem for Cuban churches after the Cuban revolution (Crahan, 1979).

In 1980 another group of Cuban pastors left the island in what is known as the Mariel exodus (Ramos, 1989). This situation began in April of that year when about 11,000 Cubans seeking political asylum attacked the grounds of the Peruvian Embassy. The Cuban government after a series of diplomatic actions decided to open the Mariel port (close to Havana) so all Cubans who had the desire could leave the country. By September 125,000 Cubans emigrated to the United States” (Martínez-Fernández et al,
The “Marielitos” (Cubans who left via the Mariel port) constituted the second big wave of Cuban immigration to the United States.

The implementation of socialism in Cuba also contributed to the mass departure of Protestant missionaries. Between 1961 and 1962 almost all foreign missionaries left Cuba. North American mission boards had the strongest presence in Cuban Protestantism. In fact, American missionaries had a decisive influence on Cuban ministry (Ramos, 1989). However, the American presence in Cuban Protestantism almost disappeared after the Revolution (Ramos, 1999). Most American missionaries left Cuba voluntarily when the United States broke diplomatic relationships with the Cuban government. Also, the American embargo against Cuba made it impossible for foreign missionaries to continue receiving financial support from the United States. As a result of the massive exodus of American missionaries, “the denominations began to reduce or even liquidate their ties with the United States” (Ramos, 1989, p. 71).

Churches and theological institutions suffered because they were dependent on foreign support (Crahan, 1979). Theological education in Cuba had to become self-supported. Cuban nationals assumed financial and academic responsibility for their own theological training.

Religious Opposition

In 1961 the Cuban government nationalized all religious schools with the exception of the seminaries and suspended all religious broadcasting. The radio program The Baptist Hour survived a few months on the radio. Caudill (1975), former president of the
Western Cuba Baptist Convention, cites the words of Raúl Castro when the Baptist program was finally suspended: “Baptists will never return to the air in Cuba” (p. 34). During the following months, all church-affiliated hospitals and clinics were also confiscated. The government prohibited the celebration of public religious services outside of church buildings. Churches were obligated to obtain permission to organize many activities (Ramos, 1999). Although in 1975 the Cuban Communist Party recognized the right of Cubans to follow any religion, in practice “believers were discriminated against if not persecuted” (Martínez-Fernández et al, 2003). Seventh-day Adventists suffered constant opposition and persecution by the Cuban government as Rosado (1985) explained in his research on the relationship between the Adventists and the Cuban communist government. Reza (1994) describes the opposition the Church of the Nazarene suffered from the regime in Cuba expressing that “harassment was constant, often petty, designed to apply unremitting pressure on the Christians” (p. 36).

The Cuban government did not include seminaries when religious schools were nationalized. Theological seminaries were perceived as institutions with the objective of preparing local clergy. Consequently, they did not compete with the communist model of education. A few theological institutions, however, faced government opposition. For example, the Assemblies of God seminary in the town of Manacas was closed after the triumph of the Cuban revolution. The government closed the institution because they felt that the seminary was not cooperating with the nationalistic ideals of the revolution. When some inspectors visited the institution, they discovered that the flagpole was missing the Cuban flag (F. Álvarez, personal communication, August 22, 2001). Also,
the seminary director, Floyd Woodworth, was accused of being a CIA agent who was conspiring against the Cuban government. Woodworth, an American missionary, spent a few days in jail before he was finally expelled from Cuba (Bernal Lumpuy, 1992).

In 1965 the Western Cuba Baptist Convention suffered the consequences of the struggle between the Communist Revolution and religious institutions. The Cuban government arrested 40 pastors, 4 missionaries, and 9 lay leaders. They were accused of conspiracy against the Revolution by serving as American spies and promoting illegal traffic of US dollars. Many of them went to jail including the last two American missionaries remaining in the Western Baptist ministry, Heriberto Caudill and David Fite. As a consequence of this situation, the Baptist work struggled to survive. Because of the government persecution Bibles were destroyed and Baptist schools were confiscated (Anderson, 1990). Some of the detainees received long sentences (Ramos, 1999).

Clifton Fite (1969), the father of David Fite, tells the story of how he fought to get his son out of jail in his book *In Castro’s Clutches*. Clifton Fite relates that many diplomatic efforts were necessary to liberate his son, a Greek professor at the Baptist seminary in Havana. David Fite was released from prison on December 16, 1968, when the Cuban Minister of Interior ordered his liberty as a “special case” (p. 147). While the Baptist ministers were in prison, other leaders took responsibility for the pulpit and the ministry. For example, “young ministers who had not yet finished their schooling, elderly ministers who had retired, and many dedicated laymen” served in their absences (Fite, 1969, p. 121).
Herbert Caudill (1975) relates the story of his imprisonment after almost forty years of ministry in Cuba in his book *On Freedom’s Edge: Ten Years under Communism in Cuba*. Caudill was the last American superintendent of the Baptist work in Cuba. Believers also suffered from different kinds of subtle oppression. Caudill (1975) cites an episode that exemplifies this situation:

Christians were no longer permitted to give out tracts and other religious literature. But one active Christian layman used every opportunity to explain the cause in which he believed. He gave out many tracts. A man accosted him one day on the street, “Señor, do you have any of those papers telling about what you believe?” Happily the layman drew a tract from his pocket and gave it to the stranger. At once the man who had received the tract said, “Don’t you know that you cannot give out those papers? Come with me. You are under arrest.” That scene was repeated in many places (p. 32).

Giraldi (1998) suggests that Christians did not face persecution but discrimination. They were systematically excluded from studying psychology, pedagogy, philosophy, journalism, and taking some responsibilities. They were excluded from the Communist Party. Churches were forbidden access to the media and, consequently, they lost their “freedom of expression” (p. 157). Therefore, communist opposition to religious people in Cuba was subtle, but effective.

On November 1965, the government implemented many work camps called Military Units to Aid Production (UMAP). These places were set up “to accept all ‘antisocial elements,’ homosexuals, deviants, criminals, and others not trusted for
incorporation into the regular armed forces” (Kirk, 1989, p. 112). Thousand of believers were sent to these work camps (Ramos, 1999). At the UMAP people were obligated to work on agricultural activities, mainly cultivating sugar cane, from sunrise to sunset under the vigilance of soldiers inside tall wire walls (O. Colás, personal communication, August 24, 2002). All Nazarene pastors were drafted to the UMAP (Reza, 1994).

Wallace (1973), on the other hand, presents a different perspective on the work camps: “many people who were Christians were sent to the work camps in the early 60s, but it was because of their ‘anti-social’ attitudes rather than the fact of their faith” (p. 4).

Reza (1994) cites a report of the Latin America Department of the National Council of Churches in 1996 about how seminary students and pastors were involved in the UMAP:

1. Seminary students were legally classified as antisocial, and were grouped together with narcotic addicts, sexual perverts, etc. They were subject to draft into work camps as a substitute for military service. The term was for a minimum of three years, or until such a time as they could prove their rehabilitation.

2. Pastors fell into a somewhat different category, although it does appear that several of the pastors were also placed into the work camps. There was some uncertainty as to whether their drafting came under the regular military draft. Information available to the committee indicates that a total of eight Methodist pastors, ten Baptist pastors, and one Episcopal pastor were drafted (p. 43).
Years later, the Cuban government and Fidel Castro recognized that the UMAP was a serious miscalculation in judgment. The work camps were closed in June 1968 after receiving a lot of international pressure (Kirk, 1989).

There is one organization of former UMAP prisoners in Miami. They meet periodically and publish a bulletin. The public relations director of this organization is Emilio Izquierdo (O. Colás, personal communication, August 23, 2002).

Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary

Although the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention did not officially support the Cuban Revolution, many pastors and church members participated in the armed struggle against Batista (Acosta, 1991). Victor Toranzo and Carlos Herrera students at the Eastern Cuba Baptist Seminary served as chaplains of the rebel army (Acosta, 1991). Toranzo became the first evangelical chaplain in the revolutionary forces. Agustín González, a seminary professor, the Convention treasurer and pastor of the Second Baptist Church in Santiago de Cuba, functioned as mediator on the surrender of the Batista army to the revolutionary forces in Santiago de Cuba (Acosta, 1991). Augusto Abella, a seminary professor, president of the Eastern Baptist Convention and pastor of the church in Palma Soriano, cooperated with the new revolutionary government and “was appointed as one of the three civil commissioners with the responsibility of organizing the municipal services of the city” (Acosta, 1991, p. 86).

The Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention, however, suffered the same oppression from the communist revolution as the rest of the evangelical denominations during the
sixties and seventies. The worst period for the convention and the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary started in 1965 when many important people were recruited to work at the Military Units to Aid Production (UMAP). Pastors, seminary students, lay leaders, and even the president of the ECBC had to work at the UMAP. During that time the ministry in eastern Cuba diminished in numbers at the same time that its leaders became stronger in convictions and the church was “purified” (R. Acosta, personal communication, December 7, 2002).

Orlando Colás, a graduate of the first seminary class, was the pastor of the church in the town of Palma Soriano, a seminary professor, and the president of the Convention when he was enlisted to work at the UMAP. This situation caused an internal struggle with the ECBC. Colás was released after spending 14 months at the UMAP. He decided to leave the country, and the American Baptist Convention gave him the money to do so (Pesonal communication, August 23, 2002).

The following pastors were drafted to work at the UMAP: Orlando González, Roy Acosta, Elmer Labastida, Raimundo García, Asael Corrales, Cloduardo Malberty, Pedro Torres, and Rigoberto Cervantes (Acosta, 1991). Many laymen also were sent to the UMAP, including Rubén Gregorich, the conventional youth leader and Rafael Mustelier.

Roy Acosta was the pastor of a small church in a rural community when he received the order to immediately report to a military base in the city of Santiago de Cuba. As soon as he arrived at that base, he was sent to work at a UMAP camp in the central part of Cuba. Acosta could not inform his family of his situation and lost contact with them for two months. One night while he was at the UMAP, Acosta began whistling
a hymn and a Haitian peasant who was working outside the camp recognized the hymn because he, too was a Christian. The peasant decided to help Acosta and became his messenger. Acosta wrote a letter informing his family about his situation and the peasant delivered the letter even though he had to travel for many hours. In this way Acosta’s family was able to find him, although he had to spend 18 months at the UMAP. (R. Acosta, personal communication, December 7, 2002).

The government gave an order that all male students at the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary had to be present at a specific place in Santiago de Cuba. They were then sent to different UMAP camps on the Camagüey province (S. Entenza, personal communication, March 11, 2003). These students were Enoc Fumero Brizuela, Melvin Puebla Rodríguez, Eliezer Prieto Socarrás, Samuel Entenza Reguera, Moisés Abella Díaz, Jesús Zayas Matos, and Guido Livares. Samuel Entenza spent two years, seven months and eight days at the UMAP (personal communication, March 11, 2003).

Deacons and pastors’ wives continued the church ministry while the pastors were at the UMAP. Elizabeth Romero became the pastor of one church (Acosta, 1991). Eva Ondina Alarcón took care of the church in Sagua de Tánamo and Ruth Troyano Ramos did the same at the church in Cayo Mambí (D. Sánchez, personal communication, March 10, 2003). The seminary was left with only two students, Dara y Claribel, who continued their studies under the Christian education professor Elizabeth Romero (Mourlot, 1975).

On April 17, 1966 the ECBTS organized a six-month intensive course on Christian Education for women. The Baptist Convention promoted in this way women’s leadership
in many areas of its ministry with the hope that the government would respect them and the ministry could continue (D. Sánchez, personal communication, March 10, 2003). The members of this special class for women were Raquel Matos, Mirla Matos, Micaela Pérez, Graciela Pérez, Elba Terrero, Irma Herrera, Calixta Grimont, Adela Fleitas, and Loyda Nolla C. (Mourlot, 1975). The seminary rector, Marino Santos, asked this unusual group of female students to be ready and prepared to assume the leadership of the local churches while many pastors and male seminary students were at the UMAP (Mourlot, 1975). Lilia Sabas, representing the seminary faculty, welcomed the new students and told them that even though those were difficult times, the Lord still was on their side (Mourlot, 1975).

Table 5 indicates the six-month curriculum followed at the seminary during the special program for women, which was divided into two trimesters. All courses were intensive and attempted to provide a basic training in a short time.

Table 5

Faculty and Curriculum Used During the Special Program for Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>Professor</th>
<th>Trimester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>María Calás</td>
<td>1st and 2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Moraima Buasch</td>
<td>1st and 2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Testament Survey</td>
<td>Ondina Maristany</td>
<td>1st and 2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Stewardship</td>
<td>Ondina Maristany</td>
<td>1st and 2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homiletics</td>
<td>Gelasio Ortiz</td>
<td>1st and 2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biblical Atlas</td>
<td>Pascual Lorente</td>
<td>1st</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During the late sixties the seminary professors and pastors, Augusto Abella and Santiago Entenza, were accused of conspiracy against the Cuban government (Acosta, 1991). They spent some time in prison because they paid the price of living at a time when church services were “an insult for the morality” (Mourlot, 1975, p. 36). Augusto Abella had taken the place of Agustín González as both the treasurer and administrator of the seminary.

An indirect consequence of the Cuban revolution on both the ECBTS and the ECBC was the isolation they faced for many years. After the foreign missionaries left
Cuba and the government stopped for a time giving permission to pastors to attend international conferences, Eastern Baptists felt they were completely on their own. Roy Acosta (1991) describes this situation: “what has to be regretted is the isolation in which we fell after the triumph of the Revolution, and the poor efforts of Valley Forge which deprived us of a fruitful relation with the Mother Church. It also deprived us of relations with sister churches in Latin America born out of the labor of American Baptists” (p. 160).

Although Presbyterian and Episcopalian churches in many cases have cooperated with the Cuban government, many denominations, Baptist included, have not openly supported the Revolution. These churches have focused mainly on the spiritual realm and have sacrificed involvement in the political and social arenas. They believe that if they compromise their spiritual ideals it would be a “reduction of the faith to an effort to legitimize the socio-economic project existing in the country” (Acosta, 1991, p. 174). Nevertheless, inside the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention tension has existed between the pastors who support the government or want to actively participate in the Cuban society and those who believe that the church should avoid active participation in political activities (Acosta, 1991).

The Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary operates independently and without the direction of the Cuban government. The seminary is free to direct faculty and administrative appointments and to establish its own curriculum without supervision from the Cuban Communist Party. The ECBC defends the “Baptist principle” of separation between church and state (I. Matos, personal communication, June 7,
2003). As long as the seminary or any institution avoids promoting antirevolutionary ideas, the relationship with the government remains acceptable. From time to time communist officials send special agents known as “informantes” (informants) to the seminary to monitor the activities (E. Reyes, personal communication, June 3, 2003). The government use of informants to control any antirevolutionary activity is common in local churches. Nevertheless, the ECBC and the ECBTS operate with “Christian transparency without getting involved in politics;” consequently, they are confident that they do not have anything to hide from the Cuban government (I. Matos, personal communication, June 7, 2003).

The ECBTS Current Situation

The Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary occupies a special place in the life of the ECBC. Joel Rosales (1999) considers the work of the seminary as the heart of the ministry at the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention. The institution has been through many difficulties during its history. Nevertheless, “these days represent the best time in the seminary history” (R. Acosta, personal communication, December 7, 2002).

Purpose and Objectives

The Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary exists for the purpose of training pastors for the ECBC (E. Fernández, personal communication, December 9, 2002). Although the seminary accepts applicants from other denominations, its main purpose is to prepare the future leaders of the Baptist Convention. The seminary is commonly
known in eastern Cuba as the “school of prophets.” All male graduates from the seminary immediately are ordained as “reverends.” The Western Baptist seminary does the same with its graduates, but instead of reverends they are ordained as “presbyters.” Female graduates from the Eastern Baptist seminary are called “missionaries” instead of reverends. The ECBC does nor ordain women as pastors. Although currently the Baptist Convention has three or four female pastors in its churches, they are regarded as pastors by their local churches, not by the convention. Most of the time, however, local churches prefer males as their pastors (R. Acosta, personal communication, December 7, 2002).

The Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention recognizes only graduates from the ECBTS as pastors of eastern Baptist churches. The Western Baptist Convention can accept graduates from the Eastern Baptist seminary, but the Eastern Convention does not receive pastors from the Western Baptist seminary. Eastern Baptists believe that in this way they protect themselves from different doctrines, sects, and erroneous teachings (E. Reyes, personal communication, August 23, 2002). Both the Eastern and the Western Baptist Conventions are concerned that some people may apply to their seminaries with a conscious or unconscious hidden agenda such as trying to improve their social status when they work as pastors (J. Rosales, personal communication, March 10, 2003; González, 1999).

The seminary’s distinctive colors are white, blue, and gold. The first class at the seminary chose “Placer Verdadero es Servir al Señor” (A True Pleasure is to Serve the
Lord) as the official hymn of the institution. Table 6 includes the hymn originally written by Frank C. Houston along with a Spanish translation by Ernesto Barocio.

Table 6

EBTS Official Hymn

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No hay obra más notable, ni paga mejor</td>
<td>There is no nobler deed nor better pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servirle yo quiero, con fe y con amor</td>
<td>I want to serve Him with faith and love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servirle yo quiero desde hoy</td>
<td>I want to start serving him today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¡Servirle a Jesús! ¡Servirle con fe!</td>
<td>To serve Jesus! To serve him with faith!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Que paga tan rica tendré</td>
<td>I will receive a great payment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No importa que sufra; sufrió Él por mí</td>
<td>It does not matter if I suffer because he</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>suffered in my place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sirviendo a Jesús soy feliz</td>
<td>I find happiness serving Jesus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diré la verdad; le seré siempre fiel</td>
<td>I will speak truth; I always will be faithful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No importa que todo lo pierda por Él</td>
<td>It does not matter if I lose everything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>because of Him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riquezas eternas en Cristo tendré</td>
<td>I will have eternal riches in Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desde hoy sólo a Él serviré</td>
<td>Starting today I will only serve Him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El odio del mundo por Él sufriré</td>
<td>The world will hate me because of Him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pesada la carga sin duda será</td>
<td>It will be a heavy burden without doubt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mas sé que su gracia no me ha de faltar</td>
<td>But I know, His grace will not leave me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All seminary applicants need to attend a special course for prospective students. This course lasts four or five days. The requirements to attend seminary are these: 1) must be a member of a Baptist church, 2) must receive local church support with no more than three votes against the application, 3) must obtain a letter of recommendation from the pastor, 4) must be at an academic level of twelfth grade or what is known in Cuba as “pre-universitario,” 5) must have at least six months of experience on the mission field, 6) must be in good health, 7) cannot be divorced, 8) must be between 20 and 35 years, 9) must have more than three years since being baptized, and 10) the spouse or fiancée must attend the special course for applicants.

The ECBC named in 2003 a special committee to decide whether people who divorced before their conversion to Christ can become pastors of Convention churches (Memoria Anual, 2003). A final decision is expected in February, 2004. The admission criteria are very strict, according to Efraín Reyes. The requirements of never being divorced or being a virgin do not reflect the Cuban reality (personal communication, August 23, 2002). On the other hand, however, Rosales (personal communication, July 15, 2002) believes the admission criteria are flexible.

The Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention has lost a few pastors in recent years because some of them, after visiting the United States, did not return to Cuba; others have either divorced or committed adultery. During the year 2001, the Convention lost
five pastors: Jorge Sixto, Juan Miguel Cabrera, Handel Robert, Eliel Matos, and Andrés Olivares (Acosta, 2002, March/April). In 2002, the Convention fired two pastors accused of bad testimony: Moisés Abella and Alexander Reyna (Memoria Anual, 2003). Reyna graduated from the seminary in February 2002 and worked as a pastor for only a few months. Also, two more pastors left Cuba permanently.

The problematic situation the convention has faced with some pastors in recent years has created an internal struggle within the ECBTS. On the one hand, there is a need for more pastors to meet the needs of the convention. At the end of 2002, the ECBC had 255 local churches and only 150 pastors and female missionaries (Memoria Anual, 2003). Interestingly, in 1959 this situation was the same because a special commission of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention recognized that the number of seminary graduates “has not been enough to satisfy the existing demand” (Deulofeo Pérez, 1986, p. 39-40). However, some people believe that the seminary needs to be more selective in order to avoid future incidents with the graduates. To avoid the risk that individuals will use their seminary studies as an opportunity to leave the country, the ECBC Executive Board imposed a restriction on all seminary graduates against leaving the country during their first five years of ministry (Memoria Anual, 2003).

Theology
The Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention holds to a conservative theological base and yet it maintains a strong policy of close cooperation with other evangelical denominations. Following its American Baptist heritage, the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention has pursued an interdenominational course (Acosta, 1991). The Western Cuba Baptist
Convention, on the other hand, does not promote or adhere to any kind of interdenominational activities (Acosta, 1991). This difference has produced some conflicts between the two conventions. Acosta (1991) cites J. Luis Molina, the secretary of the Convention in 1938, who represents the ideology of Eastern Baptist regarding interdenominational relationships: “God grant that the moment comes in which all denominations in Cuba would unite in a strong, fraternal tie with only one thought: Cuba for Christ” (p. 48).

The Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention inherited the theology of the American Baptists. However, they now hold a more conservative theological position than the American Baptist Convention (Acosta, 1991). According to Acosta (1991), two things may have caused this situation: the isolation of the Cuban church after the revolution and a reaction of the Convention to the political process in Cuba.

Liberation Theology did not affect the ECBTS because they were well prepared to resist it (D. Sánchez, personal communication, March 10, 2003). According to Campos (2000), Liberation Theology has been a Latin American theological movement that uses a theological method focused on praxis and holds a revolutionary theology of socio-political liberation of the poor. Eastern Baptists and its seminary were not affected by Liberation Theology. The seminary continued using the same curriculum after the Cuban revolution. In general the ECBC has rejected all liberal influences on its theology.

The missionaries that the American Baptist Home Mission Board sent to Cuba failed to establish a theology according to the Cuban reality. They just repeated their theology of origin without even considering the adaptation of their theological beliefs to
the Cuban context (Acosta, 1991). Consequently, Eastern Cubans struggle to define their own theological convictions. Nevertheless, the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary adheres to a doctrinal statement that was elaborated when the institution was established:

1. We believe that the Bible, constituted of Old and New Testaments, is inspired by God and is the supreme authority in matters of faith and conduct (II Timothy 3: 16, 17; II Peter 1:19-21).

2. We believe in the supernatural as a vital element in the revelation and operation of the Christian faith (John 14:26; 15: 26-27).

3. We believe in God, creator and sustainer of the universe, who eternally exists in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:1; Acts 17:24-29; Matthew 3:13-17; 28:18-20; 2 Corinthians 13:13).

4. We believe that Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit and was born of the Virgin Mary, and that He is true man and true God, and that He is the only and sufficient mediator between God and man (Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:1-19; Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5-6).

5. We believe in the personality of the Holy Spirit and that His ministry consists in revealing Christ to men in the regeneration and sanctification of their souls (John 14:16-17; 16:7-15; Ephesians 4:30).

6. We believe that man was created in the image and resemblance of God and that he sinned and thus he suffered spiritual death (Genesis 1:26-31; 2:7; Romans 3:23; 6:23).
7. We believe in the vicarious death for our sins of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the resurrection of His body, in His ascension into heaven, and in his personal and visible future return to earth; and that salvation is obtained only through a personal faith in Him (Romans 5:1-8; Acts 1:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; John 3:16, 36; Ephesians 2:8-10).

8. We believe that baptism is the believer’s immersion in water, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; the essential elements of redemption are demonstrated in this way: the death and the resurrection of Christ, which are also essential elements in the believer’s experience: the death to sin and the resurrection to a new life (Matthew 3:13-17; John 3:22-28; Matthew 2:18-20; Romans 6:1-11; Colossians 2:12).

9. We believe that Holy Communion is the commemoration of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ until He comes. We believe that the bread represents the body of Christ broken for our sins and that the juice of the vine symbolizes His blood shed for the remission of our sins (Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:23-26).

10. We believe that a New Testament church is a body of baptized believers according to the Scriptures, associated in worship, service, sharing the gospel, and in the establishment of the Kingdom in the whole world (Matthew 18:15-17; Acts 2:41-47; 15:1-41; 6:1-7; 13:1-4; 1 Corinthians 1:2).

11. We believe in the separation of Church and State because these are institutions that function independently; consequently, this seminary will be kept
freely of all State interference (Matthew 22:16-22; Acts 4:18-20; 5:28-29)

(Catálogo, 1961)

In the 80s the ECBC started receiving dispensationalist and charismatic influences (Acosta, 1991). Dispensationalism has become very popular in the ECBTS and the Eastern Convention (J. Rosales, personal communication, July 16, 2003). Eastern Baptists believe that God will bring a better future for them. Dispensationalism provides the hope they need to endure the present time with the expectation of a better one.

Organizational Structure and Administration

The Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention has a Commission for Ministerial Preparation that serves as the governing board of the ECBTS. This commission directs, controls, and approves most of the important decisions at the seminary. Ernesto Fernández assumed in 2002 the acting position of seminary rector after the resignation of Rodolfo Rodríguez. Fernández, also pastor of the Baptist church in Holguín, is the President of the Commission for Ministerial Preparation at the Eastern Convention. He became interim rector in the absence of a new rector.

The seminary rector deals with academic affairs and also serves as the chief executive officer. In Cuba a rector is a person who does the functions of a seminary president. For this reason, Dante Sánchez believes that the seminary is facing a crisis because it did not have a rector for a long time (personal communication, March 10, 2003). Osbel Gutiérrez, a pastor with graduate studies in Brazil, declined the opportunity of becoming the new seminary rector in 2002. In 2003, Miguel Ernesto
Ricardo Pantoja, pastor of the Baptist church in the town of Majagua, was offered the opportunity of becoming the new rector. He accepted the position on May 2003 and is expected to begin his tenure in September 2003 (I. Matos, personal communication, June 1, 2003).

The seminary administrator is in charge of the material needs of the school; the chaplain deals with the spiritual needs. The seminary also has a female internal director known as “Mother in Charge” who helps with the normal life of the institution. The current seminary staff members are: Eduardo Roig, chaplain; Raúl Mora, administrator; Ariel Rodríguez, chaplain and administrator at the Villa Teresita campus; Ester Diamela Casaus, mother in charge; Mariolis García, secretary, Besmides González, cook; Carlos Barbán, cook aide; Rudy Mora, driver; Reina Napoles, janitor; José Álvarez, administrative assistant; and José Rodríguez, agriculture assistant.

The ECBC supports the seminary. Through offerings local churches provide the money necessary to maintain the institution. Students do not pay for their education. All students receive free tuition, room, and board. The seminary dormitory and classrooms share the same building (see Figure 9). Students also receive a monthly salary during their four years at the seminary. The amount of money they receive varies according to their dependants. Since the Convention struggles to find enough economic resources for the seminary, local churches also cooperate with food for the students (Matos, 2003).
The seminary presented a tentative budget for the school year 2002-2003 on October 22, 2002. Table 7 contains the seminary budget designed by the administrator and the interim rector. This financial plan ideally could cover the seminary needs and allow it to fulfill its functions more effectively.

Table 7

Ideal Seminary Budget for the 2002-2003 Academic Year (All amounts are in USD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Per month</th>
<th>Per year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Food for all Students, Faculty and Staff</td>
<td>2,950</td>
<td>29,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Students’ Stipends</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Missionary Field Trips of Students</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Travel Expenses of Faculty</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 Faculty and Administration Meetings 30 300
6 Payroll of Staff and President’s Salary 130 1,560
7 Maintenance of Facility and Furniture 60 600
8 Bills: electricity, phone, office supplies, gas, etc. 150 1,800
9 Appreciation Gift for Faculty 1,080
10 Miscellaneous and Emergencies 90 900

TOTAL 4,000 41,640

11 Offering Received in October from Churches in the Convention 2,700

12 Current Amount Needed to Meet the Budget (38,940)

Informe General del Plantel, 2002.

In collaboration with the seminary the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention sponsors twelve centers for lay leadership training. These centers are located throughout eastern Cuba. In 2002, 113 lay workers graduated from this program (“Mensajeras,” 2002 May/October). At the beginning of the year 2003, these lay centers had an enrollment of approximately five-hundred people (Memoria Anual, 2003). Pastor Miguel Vázquez directs a special lay training center in the eastern town of Baracoa called “John McCarthy”.

The Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention has an agreement with Luther Rice Bible College and Seminary in Atlanta to work with the lay training centers. Luther Rice provides the curriculum called Bible Training Center for Pastors and Leaders (BTCP). All lay centers will be using the ten-book BTCP curriculum during two and a half years. The
Commission of Ministerial Preparation along with the Commission of Lay Ministries coordinates this cooperative program with Luther Rice (*Memoria Anual*, 2003). Ronald Long, Director of international Missions, directs the cooperative program from Luther Rice.

José Norat, as the Caribbean and Latin American representative of the American Baptist convention, coordinates the American Baptists’ work in Cuba. Eastern Baptists have only a “fraternal” relationship with their “mother” American Convention. American Baptists provide financial help to the ECBC from time to time. Howard Atkinson is the representative of the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention to the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention. They also help the ECBC periodically.

Faculty and Student Body

Almost all students at the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary come from churches within the ECBC. At the beginning of the school year 2002-2003 the seminary had 63 students. Currently, the seminary does not have enough housing for married couples. Therefore, all married students must leave their spouses at home while they move to the seminary. They are allowed to visit their houses approximately once every three weeks. All students are younger than 35 years old. Table 8 provides a description of the ECBTS student body for the school year 2002-2003.
Table 8

Enrollment and Student Body, 2002-2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Single Women</th>
<th>Single Men</th>
<th>Total of singles</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>With children</th>
<th>Total of children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Informe General del Plantel, 2002.

The faculty of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary is composed mainly of pastors from the ECBC. All faculty members offer their services voluntarily without receiving a salary. Seminary professors travel to the seminary campus from where they live. This situation is difficult because of the bad public transportation system in Cuba (E. Fernández, personal communication, December 9, 2002). The American Baptist Convention periodically sends teachers to the seminary. The only full-time faculty member is the seminary rector. The Commission of Ministerial Preparation and the rector appoint the faculty. Table 9 presents the current seminary faculty and the subjects they teach.
### Table 9

ECBTS Faculty, 2002-2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Subject(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miguel Ángel Vázquez Rodríguez</td>
<td>Educational Ministry, Discipleship, Church Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enio Navarro Castellanos</td>
<td>Sects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joel Rosales Cortés</td>
<td>Systematic Theology, Synoptic Gospels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roy Acosta García</td>
<td>History and Baptist Principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elmer Labastida Alfonso</td>
<td>Acts, Romans, Literature of John</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osbel Gutiérrez Pila</td>
<td>History of Christian Thought and Prophets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ondina Maristany Hernández</td>
<td>Pastoral Epistles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubén Ortiz Columbié</td>
<td>Stewardship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariolis García Galindo</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernesto Fernández González</td>
<td>Counseling, Christian Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freddy de la Puente Legrá</td>
<td>Poetical Books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rafael Mustelier Repilado</td>
<td>Pastoral Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilberto Prieto Socarrás</td>
<td>Evangelism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eugenia Álvarez</td>
<td>Historical Books, Biblical Geography, Archeology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consuelo Ortíz</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eduardo González del Río</td>
<td>Old Testament Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaldo Matos Delgado</td>
<td>Hermeneutics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camilo Lovaina Matos</td>
<td>Systematic Theology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most faculty members are graduates of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary. As a result of the political and economic situation in Cuba, it has been difficult for the faculty to study in different countries to pursue graduate degrees. Also, since the Cuban government does not recognize or grant accreditation to religious studies, seminary graduates cannot transfer their credits to other higher education institutions.

Nevertheless, seminary professors hold graduate and secular degrees. Ondina Maristany has a doctorate in law. She also studied at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Forth Worth, Texas, and worked as a Southern Baptist missionary before the Cuban revolution (D. Sánchez, personal communication, March 10, 2003). Osbel Gutiérrez has a master's degree in theology from the Baptist Seminary in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Elmer Labastida has a licenciatura degree from the Evangelical Seminary in Costa Rica. Joel Rosales has a licenciatura degree in from the University of Oriente in Cuba.
Roy Acosta holds a *licenciatura* degree from the University of Oriente, another *licenciatura* degree from the Evangelical Seminary in Costa Rica, and a doctor of ministry degree from San Francisco Theological Seminary. Finally, Consuelo Ortíz has a degree in psychology from the University of Oriente.

Rubén Ortiz, Mariolis García, and Eugenia Álvarez teach at the seminary although they are lay people without seminary studies. Eumelia Carvajal and Francisco Álvarez are graduates of Los Pinos Nuevos Seminary.

Curriculum and Academic Program
The ECBTS offers a four-year program leading to a bachelor in theology degree. Students are required to write a bachelor’s thesis in order to graduate. However, seminary students who did not finish the twelfth school grade, known in Cuba as “pre-universitario,” receive a diploma in theology. Students who decide not to write a thesis receive a certificate in theology instead of a bachelor’s degree in theology. Female students usually receive a bachelor’s degree in Christian education instead of theology to prevent them from being confused for pastors. Male students can also change the name of their degrees to Christian education from theology if they consider themselves more teachers than evangelists (E. Reyes, personal communication, June 3, 2003).

The seminary has been doing construction work to build a second floor on the main building of the seminary campus (see Figure 10). They are considering starting programs in Music and Christian Education after they finish construction. The seminary
Seminary students spend their first year at the Villa Teresita campus. The remaining three years are at the main campus in the city of Santiago de Cuba. Every weekend each student is required to do field work at an assigned church. The third year is considered a “practical” year. Students work under the supervision of a pastor at a local church. The department of Ministry Relationships (Relaciones Ministeriales) designates the place where the seminary students spend their practical year in ministry. Third-year students take some special courses once every month on the seminary campus. The third year of studies is used as pastoral practice in local churches.

The seminary curriculum was revised in the year 2000 after more than 20 years using the old one (R. Rodríguez, personal communication, August 23, 2001). Every course is of a one-month duration and students take two courses per month. The
schedule is flexible depending on whether the assigned professors live outside Santiago. If this is the case, the courses they teach last approximately one week, but meet every day for classes. Table 10 presents the current seminary curriculum during the four-year program.

Table 10

Seminary Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian Worship</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-Testament Period</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Testament Introduction</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Testament Introduction</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homiletics</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systematic Theology</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hermeneutics</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Ministry</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelism</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Testament Introduction</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Testament Introduction</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homiletics</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

131
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Systematic Theology</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synoptic Gospels</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stewardship</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romans</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systematic Theology</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homiletics</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Christianity</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sects</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synoptic Gospels</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romans</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systematic Theology</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homiletics</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Christianity</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastoral Theology</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systematic Theology</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eschatology</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Current Cuban Policy Regarding Religious Institutions of Theological Education

In 1961, the Cuban government established an office of religious affairs as a part of the Cuban Communist party (Ham, 1999). In 1985, the office was given the status of a department. J. Carneado, a Marxist scholar, led this department until his death in 1993.
(Ramos, 1989). Caridad Diego Bello, a member of the Cuban Communist Party, has directed the religious affairs department since 1993 and personally deals with the most important issues concerning religious institutions (Ramos, 1999). All theological seminaries operate under the umbrella of their religious organizations or denominations. All religious organizations must report their annual statistics and general operations to the office of religious affairs (E. Reyes, personal communication, August 24, 2002).

Roy Acosta (1991), current president of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention, argues that the First National Congress about Education and Culture on April 1971 played an important role in establishing the Cuban government policies regarding religion. A final declaration at the end of the Congress concluded that the Cuban revolution based its policies concerning religious activities on the following principles (Acosta, 1991):

1. Not to consider religious phenomena as a central and primary element of our activities. Our fundamental efforts must be directed to the construction of the socialist society and we must in this case, of course, pay attention to and define the steps to be taken in the ideological struggle.

2. Absolute state-church separation in all fields.

3. Not to stimulate, support or assist any religious group, nor request anything from them.

4. We do not share the religious beliefs, neither do we support them or their cult.
5. The revolution respects religious beliefs and considers them as individual rights. We do not impose, persecute or repress anyone due to his/her religious beliefs.

6. Having as central matter the construction of socialism, the resolution makes room for and gives opportunity to, in our transforming work, everybody regardless of whether he/she has or has not any religious belief.

7. Our policy is to unmask and combat obscurant and counter-revolutionary sects (Acosta, 1991, p. 146).

In 1976, Cuba adopted a revised constitution, recognized as the “socialist constitution,” replacing the version elaborated on 1940 (Ramos, 1989). The Cuban constitution represents the most important system of fundamental laws and principles for the country. In 1992, the Cuban Congress, known as the National Assembly of Popular Power, approved some amendments to the constitution. These revisions removed the designation of Cuba as a country based upon Marxist-Leninist philosophical materialism (López Oliva, 1994). Although the 1976 version of the constitution guarantees freedom of religion, the changes made in 1992 gave more rights to believers and prohibited discrimination against religious people. According to López Oliva (1994), “believers were thus promoted to full citizenship and assured of equal protection under the law” (p. 940):

Constitution (1976)

Article 41st. Discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, or national origin is prohibited and is punished by the law.
Article 54th. (1) The socialist State, which bases its activity and educates the people on the scientific-materialistic conception of the universe, recognizes and guarantees the freedom of consciousness, the right of everyone to practice any religious belief, and to practice, within the respect for the law, the religion of his choice. (2) The law regulates all activities of religious institutions. (3) It is illegal and punishable to oppose the faith or the religious belief against the Revolution, education, the fulfillment of the job duties, the defense of the fatherland, the reverence to the national symbols, and all duties established on this Constitution.

Constitution (1992)

Article 8th. The State recognizes, respects and guarantees religious freedom. In the Cuban Republic, religious institutions are separated from the State. All religious beliefs enjoy the same consideration.

Article 42nd. Discrimination on the basis of race, skin color, sex, national origin, religious beliefs, and any other thing against human dignity is prohibited and is punished by the law.

Article 55th. The State, which recognizes, respects, and guarantees the freedom of consciousness and religion, recognizes, respects, and guarantees in the same way the freedom of each citizen to change religious beliefs or not having one, and to profess, within the respect for the law, the religion of his choice. The law regulates the relationship between the State and religious institutions.
The Cuban constitution mentions a law that regulates the practice of religion in Cuba. Nevertheless, that law never came to existence (R. Acosta, personal communication, December 7, 2002). Although evangelical leaders have requested the elaboration of religious law in order to know what parameters under which to operate, the Cuban government has refused to articulate such a law (L. Veguilla, personal communication, December 11, 2002). As a result of this situation, the administration of religious policies at all levels in Cuba has been inconsistent (Ramos, 1989). Grahan (1985) believes that “the revolution’s position on religion flows from Cuba’s historical experience and Lenin’s belief that religion is an individual matter” (p. 334).
Summary of Findings

Cuba has been a communist country since 1961 when Fidel Castro openly embraced this political ideology. Some people, especially in the United States, commonly perceive communism and Christianity as mutually exclusive. Nevertheless, socialism as an economic system is not contradictory per se with Christianity in the same way that capitalism is not necessarily the Christian model for a society. The notions of liberty and social justice can be argued from either political perspective. Also, communism and capitalism can be used as excuses for dominance and oppression. John K. Galbraith described this situation (1981): “Under capitalism man exploits man. And under communism it is just the reverse.” (p. 352)

Dewart (1963) provides one of the first attempts to describe the relationship between Christianity and the Cuban revolution. He concludes his discussion on the possible conflict between Christianity and communism this way:

None of the foregoing denies the incompatibility of Christianity and Marxism-Leninism. The question is whether Christianity is convertible with anticommunism. The suggestion made here is that it is not, and that, formally speaking, to be a Christian is not to be anticommunist. To think otherwise may

138
materially imply a sort of sociopolitical Manichaeanism that some Christians appear ready to accept as a simple corollary to the Apostle’s Creed (p. 203).

Nevertheless, after the Cuban revolution in 1959 and particularly during the 1960s and 1970s Christians in Cuba were discriminated against and oppressed in different ways. Fidel Castro recognized in 1991 that the Cuban Communist Party erroneously made atheism its religion. This situation created an antagonistic relationship between Christianity and the Cuban government. Although the Cuban communist regime never issued an antireligious policy, in subtle ways Christians suffered the consequences of the religious ideological conflict. De la Torre (2002) describes how this divergence of worldviews affected Christianity: “Christians were refused entry into the Communist Party, a route to economic advancement, and were denied high-level government and university positions. Hence, no sociopolitical or economic reason existed to be a Christian” (p. 100). Also, the Military Units to Aid Production (UMAP) were a failed attempt to regenerate the “old” segments of the Cuban society. Religious leaders and seminary students were sent to work at the UMAP with the objective of rehabilitating their minds according to the new communist society. The Cuban government had to close the UMAP camps due to international and local pressure.

The exodus of pastors and missionaries, the American economic embargo against Cuba, and the government opposition toward religious people affected Cuban Protestantism and Cuban theological education. Since 1985, the Cuban government has started a slow process of what they call “rectification of errors.” The social situation of
Christians has improved in recent years. Although affected by the economic crisis known as “special period,” which originated after the fall of the Soviet Union, Protestantism in Cuba is growing. The difficulties Cuban Christians have faced during many years have purified their churches by increasing their faith and religious fervor. Communism and Christianity have learned to live together in Cuba even though they started with difficulties. Theological education in Cuba not only survived the negative effects of the Cuban revolution, but also has emerged stronger than ever.

Discussion of Findings

What can be expected if a change in the political system occurs? Fidel Castro and the Cuban regime have been able to endure 44 years of difficulties. Castro is the president who has been in power longer than any other. Consequently, it is unclear what will happen to Cuba after Fidel Castro dies or a change of the political system occurs (Chang, 2002). Kennedy (1998) cites the words of Marcos Ramos, a historian on Cuban Protestantism, who summarizes what is commonly believed in Cuba: “as long as Castro is alive he will be able to maintain control” (p. 19).

Fidel Castro has announced that his successor will be his brother Raúl, who is only four years younger than he (Chang, 2002). In Cuba nobody knows what will happen in a post-Castro era. At the moment one thing is for sure: “the government does not have the intention to promote a political change. There are only comments about improving the existing political system” (R. Acosta, personal communication,
December 7, 2002). Suchlicki (2001) argues that two main issues are essential defining any speculation about a post-Castro Cuba:

> The key question is whether the institutionalization of the revolution, as we understand it now, will survive the transition from the totalitarian/paternalistic rule of Fidel Castro. And equally as important, what can any emerging leadership hope to accomplish within the existing sociopolitical and economic context?” (p. xv).

The Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention and its seminary are uncertain about the future (Acosta, 1991). They do not know how to prepare or even imagine a possible ministry scenario with a different political system. Joel Rosales, a seminary professor and pastor of the First Baptist Church in Santiago de Cuba, points out, “Any political change will take us by surprise. We trust that the Lord will guide us through whatever future circumstances” (personal communication, July 15, 2002).

**Recommendations**

Economic resources are the primary need of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary. The institution’s major obstacle to growth and institutional development is lack of money. The offerings that churches from the ECBC give annually to the seminary are insufficient to cover the expenses that would allow the institution to improve and better serve the ECBC. The economic situation in Cuba affects the seminary. For example although the seminary receives most of its money in Cuban pesos, most of its expenditures are in American dollars. Therefore, the ECBTS
desperately needs “US dollars or what is known in Cuba as ‘hard money’ to be able to move up to another level of quality” (R. Acosta, personal communication, December, 7, 2002).

The Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention and Cuba in general does not need foreign missionaries in the traditional sense of the word (R. Acosta personal communication, December, 7, 2002). In Cuba there are plenty of national missionaries who are able to carry the ministry load by themselves. The ECBC needs money to support the Cuban nationals who are already working in different areas of ministry. The ECBC has more than 1,000 house churches led by volunteers (R. Acosta, personal communication, December 7, 2002).

The ECBTS needs to upgrade the academic levels of its faculty. As a result of the Cuban revolution, it became very difficult for seminary faculty to study at foreign institutions. A few professors have been able to attend outside seminaries or universities, but that still is not enough to increase the academic levels of the faculty. In general, faculty members need more academic preparation (D. Sánchez, personal communication, March 10, 2003). Faculty training has become a priority and represents a great need of the seminary (E. Fernández, personal communication, December, 9, 2002). There is also a need at the ECBTS for faculty and staff development through continuing education. Foreign Christian higher education institutions can help the ECBTS in two ways. First, they can provide resources and professors to help in fostering the academic preparation of the ECBTS faculty. Second, they can offer scholarships to select ECBTS faculty so they can pursue graduate degrees at those foreign institutions.
Local churches and individuals can provide the economic resources needed to promote the academic development of the seminary faculty.

The seminary needs money to hire full-time professors (E. Reyes, personal communication, August 23, 2002). The seminary faculty is composed mainly of pastors of the ECBC. These pastors need to leave their churches to teach at the seminary. Ernesto Fernández (personal communication, December 9, 2002) believes that funding full-time faculty positions would allow the institution to better train its students by improving the quality of the education they receive. At the present the seminary lacks the necessary resources to hire full-time faculty and to pay the pastors who teach there.

Transportation in Cuba is primitive (R. Acosta, personal communication, December 7, 2002). The seminary faculty face many difficulties when traveling to the seminary from where they live. There is a good system of public transportation that makes it easier for the faculty to teach at the seminary. This transportation system, however, charges in US dollars and is currently beyond the budget of most faculty members. There is a need for money that will cover faculty travel expenses.

According to Roy Acosta (personal communication, December, 7, 2002), president of the ECBC, visiting professors are greatly needed at the seminary. Therefore, filling this need can be one of the best ways for higher education institutions around the world to help the ECBTS. Visiting professors can help the seminary with the design of new courses. The seminary can adapt to the time available for visiting professors who can teach at the seminary for three days, a week, a month, or a year.
Visiting professors would need to pay their own travel expenses, but “if they are willing to live the Cuban way, with limitations” the seminary would provide them with room and board. At the present time the seminary receives all the immigration support necessary from the government so visiting faculty can teach at the seminary without facing difficulties (R. Acosta, personal communication, December 7, 2002). The ECBC does all the necessary paperwork with the Cuban government so a visiting faculty member can be granted a religious visa.

The seminary needs more dorms to accept more students. Every year, many applicants are turned away from the seminary because of lack of space to accommodate them. Also, there is a need for apartments for married students. At this time, all married students must leave their spouses at their homes because the seminary does not have facilities for married couples (I. Matos, personal communication, March 10, 2003).

ECBTS students face many economic difficulties. The ECBC does not receive enough money to meet all the needs of seminary students. The ECBTS provides full scholarships to its students and also gives them monthly stipends so they can concentrate on their studies. Nevertheless, this stipend is minimal and is insufficient for the cost of living in Cuba. The seminary needs money to increase the support of the students. Also, students need money to pay for their expenses during the weekends when they travel to help the ECBC churches.

Cuba has no Christian bookstores. The seminary library has received some book donations in recent years, but it still needs more books. The Villa Teresita campus has
approximately 500 books. The library at the main campus in Santiago has
approximately 5,000 volumes (see Figure 11). Joel Rosales (personal communication,
July 15, 2002) speaking for the ECBTS expressed the need this way: “we greatly
appreciate all book donations for the seminary library. We need more books so the
library can completely accomplish its purpose.” The seminary needs books also at the
Villa Teresita campus. The ECBTS also requires a professional librarian and assistance
with book repair materials and training.

Figure 11. The ECBTS Library in the Santiago Campus

The seminary needs computers, monitors, printers, fax machines, and
audiovisual equipment. Some Spanish computer software contains Bible study tools that
can be very helpful for seminary students and faculty. This software would also
represent an important aid for the seminary library. Currently, the seminary does not
have a computer lab or even electronic typewriters. Students need to type or hand
write their assignments. The seminary needs copy machines. For this reason professors
are unable to provide handouts for the students. The seminary also needs money to finish construction of a larger kitchen and a dining room (*Memoria Anual*, 2003).

Ernesto Fernández, the seminary’s acting rector, in his 2003 report to the Executive Board of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention, proposed major changes to the seminary. The Commission of Ministerial Preparation is scheduling a series of meetings this year to discuss the structure and future of the institution. They will revise Fernández’ proposal and decide which elements are feasible and convenient for the seminary. The major obstacle is money or the lack thereof. Table 11 contains Fernández’ suggestions for improving the seminary. He divided his proposal into 5 areas: academic, administration, library, field education, and future projects.

Table 11

Proposed Seminary changes from the President of the Commission of Ministerial Preparation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Renovate the curriculum</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Establish a program for every subject</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Establish areas of specialty for the faculty</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Renovate the faculty</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Systematic faculty training</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Modify the evaluation system</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Establish a style manual for papers and thesis</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. Raise the academic level of every subject so that can be transferred to other institutions
   Academic

9. Establish a budget according to the real needs of the seminary
   Administration

10. Review all employee contracts
    Administration

11. Establish that the administrator has to spend 75% of his time at the seminary campus
    Administration

12. Regulate the use of the seminary vehicle
    Administration

13. Establish the boundaries for all extracurricular activities
    Administration

14. Design an organizational structure to raise funds for the seminary
    Administration

15. Revise the seminary regulations
    Administration

16. Establish the autonomy of the seminary leadership
    Administration

17. Hire a professional librarian
    Library

18. Establish a scientific method of cataloging
    Library

19. Elaborate on library regulations
    Library

20. Create a database with information from the seminary and the convention
    Library

21. Establish the library as a reference center for the whole convention
    Library

22. Increase the library resources
    Library

   Missionary work

23. Control the field training of the students during
    Field Education
the weekends and the practical year

24. Assign a mentor to every student everywhere they go  
25. Design a weekly report form for the students  
26. Set aside one hour per week to promote the exchange of ideas and experiences  
27. Coordinate the students’ participation on evangelistic campaigns and summer activities  
28. Unify the educational system of the convention  
29. Create courses for different levels: Christian education, music, youth ministry, children ministry, and so on  
30. Establish the seminary as a place to exchange ideas and study  
31. Hire faculty with international recognition

Fernández, 2003

Conclusions

Even though the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention and its seminary need economic resources and they are willing to receive all the help possible, it is important to note, however, that financial assistance can create some problems if it is not distributed fairly and appropriately. For example, the economic situation in Cuba affects religion in general. Since Cubans depend on US dollars, “religion has been forced to prostitute itself for money” (E. Martin, personal communication, March 10, 2003). Economic aid to Cuban churches and the ECBTS should be directed to the Eastern
Baptist convention. This situation will allow a fairer allocation of money and will allow Cuban nationals the opportunity to remain in control. Joel Rosales (personal communication, March 10, 2003) is concerned that if this is not the case, money will destroy the good things in Cuba.

Efraín Reyes serves as the representative in the United States for the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention. He believes that some Cuban pastors have reduced the spiritual blessing during this time of awakening in Cuba. According to Reyes (personal communication, August 23, 2002), these pastors are guilty of illicit gains because “they come to the United States and receive money for talking about the ministry in Cuba, but fail to distribute it among other churches and pastors in Cuba and just keep everything for themselves.”

Cubans have proved themselves capable of doing successful ministry even with economic limitations. Cuban Protestantism has been autonomous since the Cuba revolution and should remain that way. As Jeffrey (1999) points out, “One ironic benefit of the blockade is that the Cuban churches have developed their own identities, apart from the heavy-handed influence of U.S. mission boards and volunteer-in-mission groups” (p. 1190). Also, all foreign volunteers should avoid the Christopher Columbus syndrome. Cubans assign the label of “Christopher Columbus” to foreign missionaries who remain oblivious to the Cuban Protestant situation and history and, therefore, think they are “discovering” Cuba (L. Veguilla, personal communication, December 11, 2002). Cubans need help in many areas, but they know how to do many things by themselves.
and for themselves. An attitude of service would be more effective and better received than an attitude of superiority and dominance.

In terms of church growth and ministry, this is the best of times in Cuba. The president of the ECBC, Roy Acosta, describes the growth of the Convention as “fabulous” (personal communication, December 7, 2002). Furthermore, Acosta observes that “there are churches where the members need to leave the building so visitors can have a place to sit.” Acosta also recognizes that this is the best of times for the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary. For this reason, during this year the ECBC is planning special meetings to analyze and better organize the seminary structure in order to adjust to the current church growth in Cuba (I. Matos, personal communication, March 9, 2003).

Eastern Baptists measure their church growth according to their church membership. In Cuba, church members are those who have been baptized and are faithful and committed members of their congregations (I. Matos, personal communication, January 4, 2003). Therefore, although eastern Baptist churches use membership figures only for calculating statistics, the actual numbers of those in attendance at church services is considerably larger. In the history of the ECBC, 2002 was the best year yet in terms of church growth. At the end of 2002, the ECBC had 255 local churches (Memoria Anual, 2003). Table 12 indicates ECBC church membership growth in recent years.
Table 12
Recent Church Membership at Eastern Baptist Churches*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>7,254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>7,916</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>8,844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>9,274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>10,442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>13,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>19,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>19,726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>21,241</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* “Membresía Total de las Iglesias,” 1996; Prieto, 2000; Memoria Anual 2003

These are good times for Protestantism in Cuba. Although external circumstances are less than optimal, the evangelical church as a whole, and the ECBC and the Eastern Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary in particular, are now reaping the fruit of their faithfulness to their mission and to God. Roy Acosta, president of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention, summarizes the current situation of theological education in Cuba:

I can confidently say that all seminaries in Cuba, from all denominations, are very excited, with a lot of students, and doing their best to recover the time they lost a few years ago. There is an awakening in Cuba. There is an awaking in all
churches. God uses for good all things. Above all I believe that this is a Holy Spirit movement and that God uses all situations that every country faces to foster the gospel. We are definitely in the most interesting and beautiful epoch, in my opinion, of all the evangelical history in Cuba” (personal communication, December 7, 2002).
APPENDIX A

ECBTS GRADUATING CLASSES AND

ACADEMIC DEGREES

153
First Class in 1953

Bachelor in Divinity
  Augusto César Abella Oliveros (Professor)
  José Mario Casanella Aranda (Professor)
  Agustín González Seisdedos (Professor)
  Pedro Abella Oliveros (Professor)
  Victor Lobaina Gell (Professor)
  Adolfo Ham Reyes

Bachelor in Theology
  Eliseo González Arias
  Félix Labrada Pérez
  Orlando Aramís Colás Guzmán

Bachelor in Christian Education
  Juan Pablo Tamayo Remón
  María Cristina Martínez Torres

Certificate in Christian Education
  Erlinda Mayeta García

Second Class in 1953

Bachelor in Divinity
  Juan Jesús Paneque Blanco
  Orlando Pardomo Hernández

Third Class in 1957

Bachelor in Theology
  Dante Agustín Sánchez Salazar
  Li Ebenecer Lovaina Romero
  Victor Toranzo del Río

Bachelor in Christian Education
  Guillermina Durán Oliveros
  Ruth Matos Matos

Certificate in Theology
  Alvio González Maceo
  Jesús Elías Doresca Espinoza
  Victor Ruiz Victores
Fourth Class in 1961

Bachelor in Theology
José Ramón Prieto Socarrás
Uxmal Livio Díaz Rodríguez

Bachelor in Christian Education
Elizabeth Romero Salvat
Felicia Vidal Rizo

Certificate in Theology
Buenaventura Colomé Rosabal
Cloduardo Malberty Granda
Irahelio Blas Castañeda Barbán
Orlando Demetrio González Carbonell
Amado Wilson Legrá Jardines
Bernardino Martínez Pérez
Daniel Montoya Rosales
Rigoberto Cervantes Pérez
 Andrés Olirio Llerena Cepero

Fifth Class in 1964

Bachelor in Theology
Roy Acosta García
Raimundo García Franco
Luis Villalón Rubio
Joel Rosales Cortés
Tomás Fernando Vargas Agüero
Héctor Hernández Santos
Bartolomé Elmer Labastida Alfonso
Félix Santos Perrand

Bachelor in Christian Education
Gisela Pérez Muñiz
Rogelia Alemany Moreno
Mirna Batista Feria
Dinorah Mata del Río

Certificate in Theology
Antonio Castro Luis
Ásael Eusebio Corrales Cervera
Gilberto Prieto Socarrás
Marino Martínez Pérez
Pedro Pérez Torres  
Holmes Galeano Ochoa  
Luis Manuel Figueredo Ballagas

Certificate in Christian Education
Flora Ruth Troyano Ramos  
Maria Amalia Santana Solís  
Sara Romero Salvat  
Eva Ondina Rosa Alarcón

*Special Program for Women in 1966*

Raquel Matos  
Mirla Matos  
Micaela Pérez  
Loyda Nolla  
Graciela Pérez  
Elba Terrero  
Irma Herrera  
Calixta Grimont  
Adela Fleitas

*Sixth Class in 1967*

Bachelor in Theology  
Ariel Ortíz Columbié

*Seventh Class in 1968*

Bachelor in Theology  
Gelasio Ortíz Columbié

*Eighth Class in 1969*

Certificate in Theology  
Dara Josefa Figueras González  
Jesús Zayas Matos  
Moisés Abella Díaz

Certificate in Christian Education  
Elba Nidia Terrero Marínez  
Merly Matos Terrero
**Ninth Class in 1969**

Bachelor in Theology
Samuel Entenza Reguera

Certificate in Theology
Eliecer Prieto Socarrás
Francisco Enoc Fumero Brizuela
Melvin Juan Puebla Rodríguez
Joaquín Cruz Torres

**Tenth Class in 1971**

Certificate in Music
Noemí Ramos Hernández
Irma Herrero Fiffe
Otilia Legrá Bressler
Josefa Luisa Bauza Salermo
Candita Crespo Pol

**Eleventh Class in 1973**

Certificate in Theology
Edgardo Rodríguez Marzo
Vicente Navarro Méndez
Rafael Mustelier Repilado

Certificate in Christian Education
Olvis Gámez Rodríguez
Martha Bartutis Lafita

Certificate in Music
Calixta Grimot Mustelier

**Twelfth Class in 1974**

Certificate in Theology
Andrés Ireneo Olivares Regalado
Enrique Rodríguez Sánchez
Antonio Columbié Tamayo
Víctor Manuel Sánchez Terrero
Alcibíades Rodríguez Rodríguez
Freddy Arias Fajardo
Elicerio Suárez Muguercia
Certificate in Christian Education  
Delia Carcasés Prado

Thirteenth Class in 1975

Certificate in Theology  
Daniel Hernández Carrazana  
Moisés Gainza Santos

Certificate in Christian Education  
Ana Rosa Durán Mora  
Julia Beatriz Rey Serra

Fourteenth Class in 1975

Certificate in Music  
Marisela Noa Delgado  
Olivia Legrá del Río  
Migdalia Figueredo Mojena

Fifteenth Class in 1976

Certificate in Theology  
Félix Romero Llaser  
Rey Florentino Columbié Domínguez  
José Antonio Gámez Rodríguez

Certificate in Christian Education  
Elisa Martín Pérez

Sixteenth Class in 1977

Bachelor in Theology  
Ernesto Pantoja Santos
Certificate in Christian Education  
Esther Tamayo Carballido  
Mireya Tavera Merencio

Seventeenth Class in 1978

Special Program in Christian Education  
Antonia María Bulté Abella  
Odilia Cuevas Donesant
Ana Vilia Díaz Cantillo
Martha Gomero Suárez
Yolanda Hernández Pelegrín
Marlene Noa Delgado
Esther Margot Enamorado Pérez
Nelsy Rodríguez Matos
Eumelia Matos Lovaina
Raquel Conty Alcides

_Eighteenth Class in 1979_

Certificate in Theology
Daniel Enrique Robinson Sánchez

Certificate in Christian Education
Mahalis Matos Lobaina

_Nineteenth Class in 1980_

Certificate in Theology
Marciano Marcel Bozil
Obed Matos Rodríguez
Pedro Gámes Durán

_Twentieth Class in 1981_

Certificate in Theology
Noé Lugo Matos
Néstor Rodríguez Matos

_Twenty-first Class in 1982_

Bachelor in Theology
José Luis Riverón Fernández
José Lorenzo Arencibia
Enio Navarro Castellanos
Idaldo Matos Delgado

Certificate in Theology
Antonio Hidalgo Mauricio

Special Program in Christian Education
Ramona Matos Pérez
Twenty-second Class in 1984

Certificate in Theology
   Noé Donald Gomero Machado
   Luis Enrique Andrade Cardosa
   Eduardo Roig Ramírez
   Eliel Matos Rodríguez

Twenty-third Class in 1986

Bachelor in Theology
   Carlos Mario Cervantes Maristany
   Ernesto Fernández González
   Jorge Luis Sixto Sagrés
   Oscar Dellet Martínez

Certificate in Theology
   Ariel Rodríguez Bertot

Diploma in Theology
   Oslirio Gigato Lazo
   Radumil Ricardo Lovaina
   Rubén Ginebra Castillo

Twenty-fourth Class in 1987

Certificate in Theology
   Juan Gamaliel Luis Dupont
   Miguel Ángel Vázquez Rodríguez
   Rodolfo Rodríguez Matos

Twenty-fifth Class in 1989

Bachelor in Theology
   Moisés Abella Hernández
   Orlando Adames del Río

Twenty-sixth Class in 1990

Bachelor in Theology
   José Antonio Milhet Toirac
   Abel González Gámez
   Osbel Gutiérrez Pila
Twenty-seventh Class in 1991

Bachelor in Theology
Félix Abdiel Perrand Prieto
Abel Rodríguez Blanco
Camilio Lobaina Matos
Freddy de la Puente Legrá
Handel Felipe Roberts Rodríguez

Twenty-eighth Class in 1992

Certificate in Theology
Ezequiel Charles Maslén
Norge Alfaro Borges
Rafael Tamayo Olivé
Carlos Alamino Álvarez
Obed Morales García

Twenty-ninth Class in 1993

Certificate in Theology
Aníbal Hernández Durán
Elisio Lami Moisés
Francisco Salazar Salazar
Joel Luis Dupont
Manuel Remón Chávez
Miguel Ernesto Ricardo Pantoja
Rafael Rodríguez Morgado
Ramón Rodríguez González

Thirtieth Class in 1995

Certificate in Theology
Héctor Aguilar Cabrera
Raúl Prin López
Saúl Ramírez Tellez

Thirty-first Class in 1996

Certificate in Theology
Antonio Mariño Terrero
Indira Pons Bressler
Josué Rodríguez Legrá
Thirty-second Class in 1996

Certificate in Theology
Hayde M. Rivera Romero
Eduardo González del Río
Pedro Gomero Pelegrín
Abdiel Tamayo Rodríguez
Frank Hernández Alberteris
Lázaro Alberto Cruz Aguilera
Oziel Matos Hernández
Guillermo Leoncio Muñiz
Yuris Figuereod Hechevarría

Thirty-third Class in 1997

Diploma in Theology
Demas Rodríguez Rodríguez
Donis Hernández Abella
Eugenio Batista Arce
Gabriel Suárez Abad
Jonás Hinojosa Ramírez
Juan Rodríguez Blanco
Raúl Suárez Hernández

Thirty-fourth Class in 1998

Certificate in Theology
Enrique Sael Nicolás
Ernesto Roig Ramírez
Eddy Arias Meriño
Samuel Herminio Regalado Matos
Aldys matos San Miguel
Ramón Rodríguez Morgado
Léster Acosta Fonseca
Alfredo Matos Frómeta
Raudelvis Matos Londres
Wilder Rodríguez Santos
Eliécer Díaz Ricardo
Liván Quintana Poveda
Isidro Pérez Carrión
Orlando de la Fuente Lovaina
José Carmenate Tejeda
Thirty-fifth Class in 1999

Certificate in Theology
  Alejandro Darío Bello Capote
  Baldomero Domínguez González
  Osbannis Durán Matos
  Adonis Fernández Olivera
  Abel González Matos
  Aníbal González Pelegrín
  Immer Guilarte Domínguez
  Marbelis Leyva Rodríguez
  Julio César Machado García
  Mayelín Peña Lovaina
  Noemí Perceval Elías
  Andro Arturo Vázquez Diéguez
  Ramón Vielza Rodríguez

Diploma in Theology
  Alexis García Puebla
  Manuel Fuentes Tamayo
  Emilio Noa Delgado
  Julkis Delgado Díaz
  Yosvani Díaz López
  Reinel Matos Pérez
  Francisco Milhet Durán
  Salvador Ortiz Moreira

Thirty-sixth Class in 2000

Bachelor in Theology
  Leonardo Aguilera Franyier
  Joel Gutiérrez Cabrera
  Franklin Pazos Martínez
  Yasser Martínez Rojas
  David Deulofeo Ojeda
  Lázaro Martín Piñeiro
  César Joel Pérez Olivero
  Israel Marrón Salazar
  Wilián Fonseca Céspedes

Certificate in Theology
  Alexander Durán Fiffe
  Marcos Rivera Sinclair
  Jorge Cordero Cadette

163
Wilder Igarza Cabrales  
Pedro Obregón Sánchez  
Eliezer Doresca Dictán  
Juan Miguel Cabrera  
Reinaldis Legrá Viera  
Ibhar Guilarte Domínguez

Diploma in Theology  
Eduardo Matos Matos  
Yuric Valdemira  
Ásael Regulado Pupo  
Wilder Adames  
Miguel Martínez Simón  
Armando Arriete  
Ober César Cintra  
Orlando Reyes Rodríguez

Thirty-seventh Class in 2001

Bachelor in Theology  
John Alba Silot  
Alfredo Díaz Ricardo  
René Columbié Batista  
Alexander Durán Almaguer  
Natán Gámez Acosta  
Reinaldo Eduardo La O. Cruz  
Emerson Moreno Rico

Diploma in Theology  
Nelson Fernández Sánchez  
David Martínez González  
Argelio Matos Columbié  
Armando Ramírez Oliveros

Certificate in Theology  
Samuel Alberto Rodríguez Columbié

Thirty-eighth Class in 2002

Bachelor in Theology  
Samuel Bayessa Erena (Ethiopia)  
Milton Cadet Brown  
Julio Ernesto Figueredo Mesa  
Abel García Morales
Maniel González Estébez
William Lórez Pérez
Noel Martín Romero
José Navarro Paumier
René Alejandro Noriega Fernández
Víctor Manuel de Quesada Pérez
Alexander Reina Tamayo
Eduardo Roig Ramírez
Diosbelis Soyet Calderín
Wilder Suárez Romero
Ángel Nemuel Tito Ramírez
Victoria Victorovna Sychova (Ukraine)

Thirty-ninth Class in 2003

Bachelor in Theology
Javier Herrera Cervantes
Miriam Ravelo Robles
Leonid Marsán Rodríguez
Aldo Fornaris Llorente
Jonnys González Plumier
Israel Pérez Cabrera
Jorge Luis Cantillo Navarro
Idael Matos Lambert
Emilia Almaguer Segura
Samuel Columbié Iglesias
Juan Carlos Correa Lovaina
Raúl Leyva Acosta
Carlos Rafael Herrera Moreno
Eliseo Semé Santiago
Edgardo Tamayo Mesa
APPENDIX B

GRADUATES OF THE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

AT THE INTERNATIONAL COLLEGES

IN EL CRISTO
1. Alfredo Santana Bauzá
2. Maximino Montel Fragoso
3. Antonio Martínez
4. Salvador Melenguer
5. Rafael Ferrer
6. Rosario Basulto
7. Luis Molina Valdés
8. Abelardo Rodríguez
9. Manuel Caballaría Galí
10. Juan Cabrera Polo
11. Jesús Rodil
12. Francisco González
13. José Angulo González
14. Juan Alberto López Ramírez
15. Álvaro Segura G.
16. José Martínez Chávez
17. Eligio Abella Oliveros
18. Saturnino Matos González
19. Gabriel Jardines González
20. Rafael Gregorich
21. Luis Pavón Ochoa
22. Augusto Abella Oliveros
23. Agustín González Seisdedos
24. Pedro Abella Oliveros
25. Pascual Lorente
26. Jesús Millanes Fonseca
27. Evelio Jardines Rodríguez
28. Mario Casanella Aranda
29. José Miguel García Rivero
30. Cleofás Castaños Cárdenas
31. Eleuterio Figueredo Silva
32. Mariano Duque de Estrada
33. Vicente Javier Domenech

(Deulofeo Pérez, 1989)
APPENDIX D

HYMN CUBA FOR CHRIST
By Manuel Caballeria and Adam Geibel (Roberts Lawrence, 1942). According to Véguilla (1999), the author is Reynaldo Machado.

Go forward Cuban Christians, brave soldiers of the cross,
Oh struggle for our country with ne’er a fear of loss;
That a redeemed Cuba, may come the truth to know
That hate and evil perish forever from our shore.

Chorus
Oh, brave companions, let struggle know no end,
Since Cuba for our Master, we must, oh we must defend.

It matters not if Satan doth arrogant appear,
Go forward ever firmly with ne’er a thought of fear;
The victory is certain, is ours without loss;
A crown eternal waits us when we have passed the cross.

For Christ and for His churches we fearlessly will fight,
Our captain gives us courage and arms us with His might.
Awake then, valiant soldiers, our struggle must not cease,
For Christ must have our Cuba, He must her bonds release.
APPENDIX E

LETTER FROM THE ECBC
Convención Bautista de Cuba Oriental

Dr. Roy Acosta García
Presidente - Ejecutivo

Santiago de Cuba, Noviembre 8 del 2002
“Ahora es el Tiempo”

A: Hno. Octavio Esqueda,
   Dallas, Texas.

Dr. Convención Bautista de Cuba Oriental

Asunto: Investigación sobre nuestro Seminario Teológico Bautista de Cuba Oriental.

Muy amado hermano en Jesucristo: Saludos afectuosos para usted y los suyos.

Atendiendo a su solicitud oficial de apoyo y respaldo para la investigación sobre nuestro Seminario, nuestra Junta Directiva ha tomado el siguiente acuerdo:

“Autorizar y respaldar al hermano Octavio Esqueda, en su propósito de realizar una investigación sobre la historia y el perfil del Seminario Teológico Bautista de Cuba Oriental, para lo cual tendrá acceso a la Biblioteca y a los documentos oficiales de dicha Institución y entrevistará a los pastores y profesores del mismo, todo en coordinación con el Rector de este centro de estudios teológicos y con la Comisión Ejecutiva de nuestra Obra”

De esta manera queremos estimularle ha realizar este trabajo y hacerle saber que estamos a su disposición en lo que podamos servirle.

Sin otro asunto por el momento y deseándole éxitos en sus estudios y proyectos,

CONVENCIÓN BAUTISTA DE CUBA ORIENTAL

[Señalizan firmas]
Rev. Dr. Roy Acosta García, Presidente-Ejecutivo.
Rev. Idilio Matos Delgado, Secretario General.

Félix Pena No. 20, Dicureaux, El Caneí, Santiago de Cuba
Telefax: (53) 226-648288. e-mail: cbco@p.unicuba.cu
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184

_Seminario Evangélico de Cuba “Los Pinos Nuevos” Prospecto._ (2002). (pp. 29).

Placetas: Los Pinos Nuevos.


