



ACONTECER

November 2021

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GRADUATION OF PhD IN PHILOSOPHY PROGRAM



Master Daniel Izquierdo presented his dissertation to obtain his PhD in Philosophy from a joint program SET- Graduate Theology Foundation (GTF) on Saturday, November 13, 2021. His dissertation *La reconciliación en Barth. Un análisis en busca de pertinencia (Reconciliation in Barth. An Analysis in Search of Relevance)* was evaluated by a Doctoral Board made up of professors from both academic institutions: Dr. Clara Luz Ajo, president; Dr. Reinerio Arce, thesis supervisor; Dr. Jorge Colón and Dr. Ángel Vélez from GTF; Dr. Ary Fernández and Dr. Nelson Davila from SET. Dr. Carlos E. Ham, Rector; Dr. Amos López, Dean and other SET professors also attended the dissertation.

This Newsletter interviewed Doctor Daniel Izquierdo, who commented on his dissertation:

“Karl Barth is one of the greatest Protestant theologians of the 20th century. He dedicates over two thousand pages to the doctrine of reconciliation in his greatest work, Church Dogmatics, where he argues that this doctrine is the center of dogmatics: it is the doctrine from which everything else is built. However, the Barthian doctrine of reconciliation is scarcely known in the present efforts in processes of this kind. This is the reason for my interest in researching on the apparent silence of the Barthian contributions to the topic; that is, the possible relevance not only in the field of systematic theology but from the possible contributions for the mission.”



“Working on the mystery of redemption from the paradigm of reconciliation is not that frequent in the history of the Christian thought; therefore, it was interesting to test the Barthian effort to defend and inquire on the repercussions of his statements for current theology. The starting point of our convictions is that the mediating work of Christ, understood as reconciliation, brings important and vital elements for the mission of the church and its teaching. Other paradigms are more recurrent, such as those of

atonement, sacrifice, rescue, etc., but reconciliation provides a mission component that must be vital as an ontological element of being church.”

“The thesis highlights some important aspects of this ecclesial missionary and rescues elements that are Karl Barth’s contributions to systematic theology, but with clear implications for the magisterium and the service of the church in its witness to the world today, including our homeland, which is also in need of reconciliation,” he concluded.



We asked the Rector, Dr. Carlos E. Ham, about this thesis dissertation and the academic program, and he said:

“We are very pleased that, as part of the celebrations for the 75th anniversary of SET, we were able to participate in Izquierdo’s dissertation, which was so successfully passed. This program is part of the first collaboration agreement with the GTF for training in the doctoral program in Philosophy (PhD) in the area of Theology, at a more academic level, in which 15 doctoral students, many of them members of our SET Faculty, have enrolled. A total of three PhDs have graduated to date.

“We thank God for this reaffirmation of our cooperation and wish much success and blessings to all doctoral students who are continuing their research and thesis writing. To God be the glory!”

GRADUATION OF THE BIBLICAL - THEOLOGICAL TRAINING PROGRAM IN CIENFUEGOS

The students of the Biblical-Theological Training Program gathered to celebrate the closing meeting and graduation of the course on Saturday, November 13, at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Cienfuegos.

The graduation ceremony began with a devotional and moments of gratitude by the coordinator, Rev. Gilberto Junco. This was followed by an exchange of experiences lived as people of faith and as a church during this period of pandemic in our country. Students shared anecdotes, testimonies, experiences; then, Professor Fermín Ernesto



Ojeda reminded us that God is by our side at all times and always accompanies us, so we must experience and trust Him, from our experience of faith. Another student, Maria Elena, expressed that the power of God is shown in weakness, because we learned to share, to be in solidarity, to help those who needed it in different ways. Student Yarima commented that paying attention to the family, the children, grandparents, parents, relatives has marked an important time in our lives. It has been a time of play, of teaching, of giving affection, of talking about topics that we had not find the time to do. The creation of groups in networks such as WhatsApp allowed us to pray, communicate and meet with God. Orlando referred to the identity that unites us as Cubans, something special of our culture; and that is solidarity, because we all help each other, we share a lot or a little with a neighbor, family and even with strangers.

Other experiences took over the moment: the call is to be grateful people, thanking God for surviving this pandemic that is not over yet; for the health personnel who have become giants during this time. They recalled that the silence in the isolation centers -of those who experienced it-, it was very impressive; but in the middle of the waiting, they prayed intensely to God. They also felt *God's call to serve those in need, regardless of profession, but with conviction, commitment and responsibility*. To conclude, they gave thanks for the time shared during the course, the knowledge and teachings acquired. With the prayer of thanksgiving, led by Mayelín Águeda Jorrín and the blessing by Reverend Junco, the graduation ceremony ended.

NEW PROGRAM OF DIVINITY MINISTRY AT SET

The Divinity Ministry Doctorate program (DMin) began in our Seminary sponsored by the Graduate Theology Foundation and SET. Eminently ecumenical, this program offers a professional doctorate for Cuban and Latin American women and men pastors with diverse experiences in the ministerial leadership as well as for lay people that have had an active work as leaders of other ecclesial ministries in our country, Central America and the Caribbean region and for Hispanics in other latitudes, specially the US. The objective of the Divinity Ministry is to contribute to the deepening and specialization of the pastoral body, as well as of lay people who work in other ministries in local churches. Another objective is to enhance their professional competence with the acquisition of the necessary capacities and tools for planning and managing ecclesial ministries.

Requisites for candidates to enter this program are: BA degree in Theology, Masters in Theology or an equivalent granted by a theological education institution recognized by GTF and SET. In addition, candidates should be actively working in a pastoral position or developing other ministries; and no less than five (5) years of experience endorsed by a document issued by their national church.

The program will last for two and a half academic terms. Candidates should pass two courses in two two-week face-to-face meetings each period. The first meeting took place on November 22 through a Telegram channel with the participation of 14 students, 10 men and 4 women.

We are so glad that in times of a regrettable level of relationships between our two countries, we can build bridges of collaboration and solidarity of mutual advantage and blessing for the churches of both nations.

SET DIRECTIVE BOARD VIRTUAL MEETINGS

SET Board had a series of meetings via Zoom during November, 2021:

November 5

Rector Carlos E. Ham participated in the workshop offered by the United Church of Canada on *Love and Justice*.

November 8

Rector Carlos E. Ham participated in the forum *Praxis for Liberation Today and Tomorrow* with leaders and professors from several theological training institutions in the US, Central America, the Caribbean and South America.

November 11

The Rector represented SET in the meeting of the Directive board of the Council of Churches of Cuba.

November 12

As a member of the Editorial Board of the journal *Religion and Development* of the Humboldt University in Berlin, Dr. Carlos E. Ham participated in the inaugural meeting.

November 12

Carlos E. Ham met with leaders of the Alliance of Presbyterian Reformed Churches in Latin America (AIPRAL) and the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba (IPRC) in view of the celebration of the assembly of this Alliance.

November 12

Carlos E. Ham and Waldemar Murguido met with Hellen Ruiz Castillo, secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America via Telegram.

November 16 - 18

SET Rector participated in the on-line conference celebrating the centennial of the International Missionary Commission. On Tuesday 17, he presented the topic *Latin America: The Abandoned Country?* Likewise, he is writing an article that will be published to mark this celebration.

MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES



Some of the SET buildings date back to the beginning and end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century. Its location near the sea makes the Seminary AN easy target for briny winds, still worsened by weather phenomena like hurricanes. Therefore, it is necessary to increase the prevention of risks in the Seminary by strengthening the buildings infrastructure to withstand the periodic ravages of natural phenomena.

Luis Gustavo Cepero, SET administrator, explained that it was necessary to execute diverse constructive projects in campus facilities and equipment in order to repair, refurbish and give maintenance to SET infrastructure.

Different actions were undertaken in electrical and hydraulic connections; deep cleansing of bathroom equipment; refurbishing and painting walls in most buildings. The external wall of the campus was repaired; carpentry was repaired or changed but without modifying the structural values of the facilities. The AC and electrical water heaters were given maintenance; the cold store in the kitchen was fixed. External lamps and interior fluorescent lamps were replaced by LED technology lamps. Building no. 30, destined for visitors, required more maintenance actions after serving as annex ward for the Pediatric Hospital as SET support to the province of Matanzas during the worst pandemic months of June and August. In addition, they had to tear down and build a new veranda within and outside the building. Pending elements will be repaired after finding other tools and utilities, scarce now in the market, to improve the quality of service in the diner.

We thank the workers and administrator for the hard work they have done to maintain the Seminary facilities working properly.

PASTORS FOR PEACE 31ST CARAVAN AT SET

SET received the participants of the 31st issue of the Pastors for Peace Caravan, led by Gail Walker, Baptist pastor Lucius Walker's daughter on November 18-21. Coming from the United States and Germany, the 72 participants attended different activities programmed by the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center of Havana.



A special moment of the program was the Festival of Experiences, with the purpose of reflecting on the end of the blockade and building bridges of friendship and solidarity between both countries. Besides, the participants met with pastors and ecclesial leaders and were exposed to the work of ecumenical centers in Matanzas and Cardenas; they also learned about the cultural life and history of Matanzas. The last activity took place at the Seminar on the morning of the 21, when they attended the Sunday service at the Resurrection Chapel.



“The participants represent different organizations that work in the United States to end the economic blockade to Cuba. Many people want to put an end to this blockade, because they know it does not work at all” expressed Ms. Walker.

PROJECT WEAVERS OF HOPE EXHIBIT

The project *Weavers of Hope* had to stop working for two years due to the pandemic. However, after this pause they presented their needlework pieces when the participants of the Pastors for Peace visited the Seminary, on November 20. Participants of the convoy exchanged with the women of the project about handcraft experiences from both countries.



The project *Weavers of Hope* was founded at the request of the SET Board in 2002 for women interested in learning needlework techniques. They received a small loan, and rapidly organized their work. They were able to pay back the loan and self-finance their project in very little time. The principal objective and vision



of this project was the spiritual growth of participants, improving their quality of life and that of their families, as well as transmitting their knowledge in this technique to new generations. 30 percent of the income they obtain from selling their work goes to self-financing the project to buy materials; they also do actions for the community such as donations for the sick and the elderly. They participate in the March for Memory for people who suffer from Alzheimer and other cultural events in the city. The group is deeply involved in the SET community and supports women with low resources interested in participating in postgraduate theological studies.



Monthly Newsletter

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Contributions to Evangelical Seminary of Theology in Matanzas should be made to:

*Ofelia Ortega Endowment Fund,
Fund ID: 89726, Account: 1020094701.*

This information should be written on the memo line of the check. Contributions may be made either by individuals or congregations or presbyteries. The check should then be mailed to:

*Presbyterian Foundation,
200 East 12th Street, Jeffersonville, IN 47130.*

Director

PP. Carlos Emilio Ham Stanard, D. Min/Ph. D

Writing and edition

Elizabeth González R.

Photography

Jesús Martínez León

Design and typesetting

Ingrid Fundora Hernández, D. I.

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Evangelical Seminary of Theology
www.setcuba.org



Calle Dos de Mayo Final, Apartado 1439,
Matanzas, Cuba



Monthly Newsletter
chavela.2015@nauta.cu



Secretary
s.subiaurt@seminario.co.cu



Teaching Body
adiel@seminario.co.cu



(+53) 45 242866 ext. 34



(+53) 45 290575



@Seminario Evangélico de Teología