



8600 N. Air Depot Blvd., Oklahoma City, OK 73151
Telephone: (405) 771-4521 spiritquestinternational.net

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Dear Friends & Contributors,

In the past, my information has been a history of Cuban and the Castro Dynasty. This letter contains information about Ministry and Religions in Cuba, specifically Santeria.

I am enclosing a picture page of the our Spirit Quest International work and progress in Cuba. With your help we have accomplished much. Thank you.

As mentioned under "Cuban Ministry" attached, we are already seeing results from our construction in Havana, Cuba. And, while the Cuban work is being funded separately, we have other works that have come about, and that are developing, in other regions.

Peru

It is with joy and humbleness that SQI announces the addition of a Body of Believers in Peru.

On August 3rd, Pan-Americana de Peru voted 100% to unite with Spirit Quest International at all levels of ministry. Upon recognition of the legal paperwork by the Peruvian government, the newly unified ministry will be named Spirit Quest International de Peru.

The affiliated congregations are located in most of the Peruvian cities from Horse Conchas, along the Amazon River, to Lima, Peru. We now have a 65 acre tract of land along an Amazon tributary on which we plan to build a Seminary for further biblical instruction. We have just completed our third teaching ministry visit to Peru, and are pleased to announce the graduation of more than thirty preachers who minister along the Amazon River. Traveling by boat, sometimes for days, these ministers have completed 420 clock hours of Biblical instruction over three, two week sessions.

India

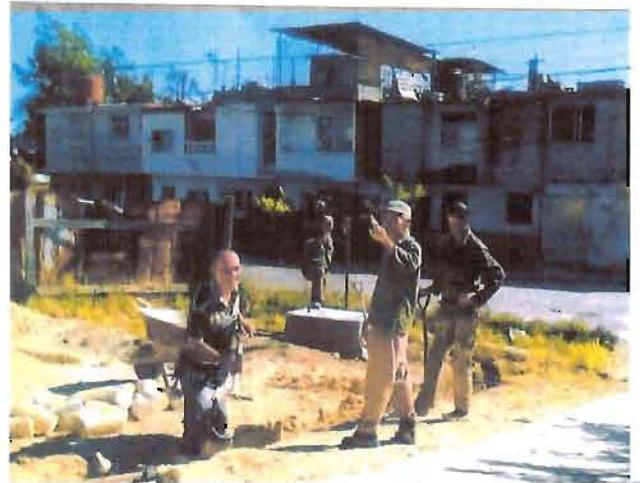
Our work in Chennai, India, continues with Pastor B. Ramesh leading the way. In our next newsletter, we will detail the work there with the inclusion of pictures of the activities..

Thank You, again, for your continued prayers and support of Spirit Quest International. Without you, it would be very difficult to continue our work for the Lord.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Bradley O. Brauser'.

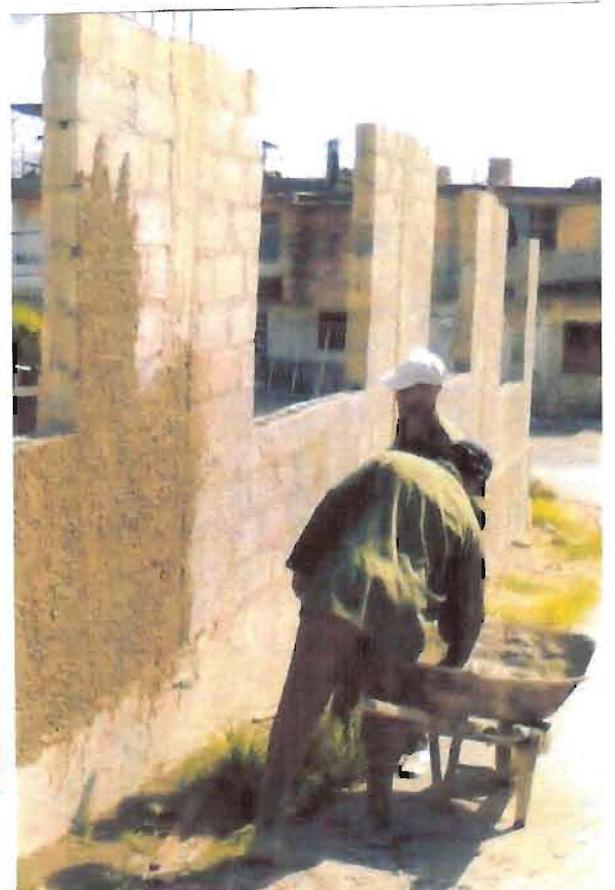
Bradley O. Brauser, Founder & President
Spirit Quest International



Havana, Cuba: The ground was cleared and leveled. Then a trench for the perimeter wall was dug.



The cement was mixed on the ground, then shoveled into wooden and re-bar structure supports.



With the perimeter support posts complete, the cement blocks were laid, then smooth coated.



Finally, a gate is installed in the support pillars, and the work on the two-story building inside continues.



People who have been watching the construction come to the services at Pastor Alien's church.

In Peru,
Preachers attending the Amazon River Bible training are treated to meals of Rice and the local "Catch-of-the-Day"!



The children are treated to a Puppet Show, which is followed by a craft class about the Bible story.

The Lord supplies the needs of His people. The ministers that attend the seminars require a large amount of food during their two week studies. This catfish went a long way towards supplying those meals. In Cuba, the construction, craft supplies, and refreshments come from donations.



Cuban Ministry

The construction of the Spirit Quest International headquarters continues to move forward with the completion of Phase One. This Phase included the perimeter wall and the first and second stories of the main structure. We thank the Lord that He has allowed for such construction in that everything is paid in full as we go forward.

What is more important than the construction is the revival spirit that is blossoming on the island. Here is what we are finding:

There appears to be a religious vacuum that is unfolding on the island. The vast majority of the eleven million Cubans reached middle age in a society that denied any existence of a loving, caring Creator. On a minor scale, we are witnessing the re-occurrence of the Great Awakening that swept Europe and the New World. But this time, it is happening on the island of Cuba.

Recently, Pastor Alien Rojas held a service in which over one hundred people attended, people that had never been to a Christian service before. For the most part, they were Santerians or Atheists, and they came to see for themselves what was being talked about. Many of them had been attracted by the ongoing construction of our SQI facility in Cuba.. The Lord is preparing to impact Cuba.

Prevailing Religions in Cuba

It is a common belief that the prevailing religion in Cuba is Catholicism. This is not entirely accurate in that the traditional Catholics, i.e., mass attending, adherents make up less than 1.5% of the populace.

What is largely unknown is that the traditional Catholic belief has been hijacked by a variety of "religions", which are primarily of the African cultural origin.



The largest of these is Santerian, and it has the official blessing of the Cuban government. Approximately 88% of the Cuban population are practicing Santerians which blend the elements of Catholicism with West African beliefs. Historically, it allowed plantation slaves to appear to be Catholic while maintaining their cultural practices.



Dancer representing Ochún

A modern example of this is where Cuban Catholics revere La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre (Our Lady of Charity). The much higher number of Santerians celebrate September 8th not as the day of the Lady of Charity, but as a tribute to the goddess "Ochun", along with the various required sacrifices which are primarily chickens.

How It Happened?

Between 1957 and 1961, it is estimated that 80% of the total ministry left Cuba in accordance with the State adopted policy of Atheism.

There were Cuban studies that circulated purporting to link religion with mental illness. Indeed, if you were a non-atheist, you were not allowed to join the Communist Party and, therefore, could not hold a job, or buy or sell products.

An example of the pressures put on Christians came about in elementary schools. Children in a classroom would be denied the noon lunchtime. The teacher would proclaim, "Pray to Jesus to bring you food." Then, after a time, the teacher would say, "You are still hungry, let's try something different." "Now, close your eyes and pray to our Leader, Fidel Castro, for food." And after the children did, suddenly the doors would swing open wide, and trays of food would arrive for the children. The teacher would then say, "Remember who supplies your needs and serve him!"

However, in 1991, a more tolerant attitude was adopted toward organized religion and the Communist Party began to allow "Believers" into their ranks.

While the practice of Santeria is most prevalent in Cuba, its numbers have spread throughout the Caribbean and especially into Mexico. Los Angeles is a center of this religion in the U.S.!

Beliefs of Santeria:

Dieties: Their god is "Olorun", and must be fed animal sacrifices and human praise.

Ritual Sacrifices: The sacrifices are most important, and are offered to "Orisha", the head Guardian or Chief god, for forgiveness of sins.

Honor of Ancestors: Ancestors are known as Ara Orun, (People of Heaven), and are prayed to for guidance.

Tradition: There 's no book. Thus, oral tradition provides continuing information.

Priesthood: Priests are *Babaloohas*, and Priestesses are *Lyalochas*. For years they are trained in oral traditions, and learn dances, songs, and healing methods.



Santeria grew in social centers called *cabildos*. The cabildo pictured here is one of the oldest in Cuba; it's located in Palmira, which is presently regarded as the birthplace of Santeria.

Animal sacrifice is an integral part of the rituals. Before the sacrifice, the animal is passed between those involved to take away their negative energy, which will then be released through the animal's death.

Music is also an important part of the practice. The Orishas are raised and brought into the physical realm through drumming and the African style of call-and-response chanting.



A Personal Note:

While on a missionary trip to visit a Christian pastor in a remote mountainous part of Mexico some years ago, it became necessary to sleep in a tent along the San Francisco River.

The next morning we were surprised to find a headless chicken fastened atop a stake posted outside the front opening of our tent! The explanation we received was that the local "priest" did not like our spreading the Word of Jesus Christ in his village. In short, we were being asked to leave.

Such practices are real, and believe it or not, are still a part of some religions in our world today.

