Latin American Adventist Theological Seminary (Seminário Adventista Latino-Americano de Teologia, SALT) is a Seventh-day Adventist Church institution responsible for the theological education in the territory of the South American Division. SALT comprises eight regional campuses. One of them operates in the territory of the East Brazil Union Mission (União Leste Brasileira, ULB) and is known as SALT-FADBA because it is located at Faculdade Adventista da Bahia (FADBA), on BR 101 Road, km 197, zip code 44300-000, in the city of Capoeiruçu, in the state of Bahia, Brazil.

In 2020, the SALT-FADBA campus had 518 students (358 of them at the undergraduate level and 160 at the graduate level) and 24 staff (of which 21 are teachers and three are administrators). In addition to a bachelor’s degree in theology, the seminary also offers postgraduate studies in the areas of Urban Mission, Pastoral Counseling and Bible Interpretation and Teaching, in addition to the Master’s program in Theology.
Developments that Led to the Institution’s Establishment

At the end of the 19th century, with the arrival of the Adventist message in Brazil, the need for workers to evangelize that territory was soon noticed. With the rapid advance of the Adventist mission, already in 1915, the Adventist Church established the Brazilian Seminary of the Brazilian Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists (Colégio da Conferência da União Brasileira dos Adventistas do Sétimo Dia), presently known as Brazil Adventist University – Sao Paulo Campus (Centro Universitário Adventista de São Paulo - UNASP-SP), in Sao Paulo in order to offer theological education and practical training for Adventist workers. However, some years later, as the Adventist work expanded in all the regions of Brazil, it became clear that the Church needed another theology school to accommodate students who could not travel to Sao Paulo.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the northern, northeastern and part of southeastern Brazil were managed by the East Brazil Union Mission (União Este Brasileira, UEB), presently known as the South East Brazil Union Conference (União Sudeste Brasileira, USEB). In order to expand the Adventist work in its territory, UEB obtained a favorable decision from the church on November 4, 1936 to establish a new school for ministerial formation. It was agreed that the school should be built in the center of the region administered by UEB, namely in the northeastern part of Brazil. Later, following the report of Pastor Roger Altman who was in charge of finding a suitable place for the school, the vote was reconsidered, deciding that the state of Rio de Janeiro would be the best location for the new college.

Thus, the school was built in the municipality of Petrópolis, in Rio de Janeiro, a few kilometers from the UEB headquarters in the city of Niterói. The school was named Petropolis Educational and Agricultural Institute (Instituto Educacional Agrícola de Petrópolis, IEAP) and inaugurated in 1939. One year after its inauguration, the name was changed to East Brazil Academy (Instituto Teológico Adventista, ITA), and later to Petropolis Academy (Instituto Petropolitano de Ensino), and is currently called Petropolis Adventist Academy (Instituto Petropolitano Adventista de Ensino, IPAE). Although it has achieved positive results in the beginning, the college was closed its theology program in 1950.

With the population growth of urban centers being driven by the rapid industrial development of Brazil, several changes also happened in the educational sector of the country in the 1930s and 1940s. The effects were also seen in the Adventist education network. In 1942, the North East Mission authorized the purchase of a piece of land for the establishment of a school in the city of Belém de Maria, in the state of Pernambuco. Northeast Brazil Rural Institute (Instituto Rural Adventista do Nordeste) was established that initially offered classes up to 5th grade of primary school. Classes began on April 20 and 21, 1943. In the following year, the school came to be known as the Northeast Brazil Rural Institute (Escola Intermediária de Belém de Maria Pernambuco). As early as 1946, the name Northeast Brazil Rural Institute (Instituição Rural Adventista do Nordeste) was adopted. In 1950, another name change took place and the school became Northeast Brazil Academy (Educandário Nordestino Adventista, ENA).

Since the East Brazil Academy theological program ended in 1950, the UEB decided to reopen a theology program, this time this would be done at Northeast Brazil Academy because the location of that school had the potential to serve students in the north of the country. The reopening took place in 1957, and the theology school was renamed Northeast Theological Seminary (the Seminário de Teologia do Nordeste). Northeast Brazil Academy offered the first two years of theology. To complete the third and fourth year of their theology education, students had to move to the seminary in Sao Paulo (currently known as UNASP-SP). Professor Robert Dean Davis worked to establish a full four-year theology program at Northeast Brazil Academy. Over the years, the number of students significantly increased and, in the following decade, the team of teachers was already well established. The following are some of the faculty: Amin Américo Rodor, Bruno and Virginia Steinweg, Dorival Souza Lima, Eduardo Zurita, Ewaldo Oliveira, Gerald David Christman, Horne Pereira da Silva, José Monteiro de Oliveira, José Nóbrega, Modesto Marques de Oliveira, Renato Emir Oberg, Robert Dean Davis, José Carlos Ramos and José Maria Bertolucci.

In 1970, Professor Robert Dean Davis created the ENA Mission project (Missão Enense), the first of its kind in the Adventist theological seminaries in Brazil. The project involved the planning and carrying out of public evangelistic series involving professors and theology students in cooperation with the local churches. The ENA Mission project helped future pastors experience ministry that they would assume after graduating. In 1971, around 80 people were baptized through the work carried out by the participants in the ENA Mission project.

Foundation of the Institution

After almost a decade of the operation of Northeast Brazil Academy in Belém de Maria, some difficulties that the school had been facing since its establishment intensified. Among them were poor postal services, ineffective phone service, and very poor local access roads that worsened significantly during rainy periods. The school had to often deal with floods caused by the overflow of the Panelas River, a situation aggravated by the fact that this river surrounded the school facilities.

In 1977, after a severe flood, Pastor Arthur Dassow, then the Northeast Brazil Academy director, informed the students that the theological program would be transferred to another region, in the state of Bahia. Upon receiving the news, the student Emerico Café Ferreira talked to a farmer in the city of Lage, in the state of Bahia, who was willing to sell his farm for the school. However, another farm, the 340-hectare Capoeiruçu Farm, located in the municipality of Cachoeira in Bahia was a better option. The farm was purchased with the support of the businessman Milton Afonso (owner of the Assistência Internacional de Saúde Golden Cross [Golden Cross International Health Care]),
who largely financed the project. The farm was purchased on October 21, 1977, for the Northeast Brazil College that would include the theology seminary (Instituto Adventista de Ensino do Nordeste IAENE, presently known as FADBA). The laying of the cornerstone took place on October 14, 1979. That year, with the creation of the Latin American Adventist Theological Seminary (SALT-SA), based in Brasilia, the Northeast Theological Seminary was incorporated into SALT, changing its name to SALT-ENA.

The classes at IAENE began in March 1980, with more than one hundred students enrolled in elementary school. In 1981, the new SALT facilities were already in use. However, the transfer of the theology program from ENA to IAENE did not take place until the end of 1986, with the inaugural class taking place on March 5, 1987. When it was transferred to Bahia, the Seminary served 199 students, enrolled in the Theology and Religion Bachelor Degree program (four years) and in the Religious Education and Bible Instructor program (two years). The first director of the new seminary, which came to be called SALT-IAENE, was Pastor Luiz Melo, who already worked in this role at the ENA Seminary.

Since its beginnings, SALT-IAENE has assumed the purpose of offering theological training, combining spiritual, intellectual, social, and missiological emphases. Thus, the institution has adopted a mission statement “to train theologians, pastors, and leaders, combining theory and practice in teaching activities, research, and outreach, with the Bible as the central authority for theological reflection.” The school’s vision is “to be a benchmark of excellence in theological education aiming for the formation of leaders who demonstrate spiritual and intellectual competences for the full exercise of ecclesiastical activity and the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

**History of the Institution**

With the activities being carried out in a new location and facilities, other opportunities came, and with them also new challenges. The institution sought to remain strong in the areas of education and mission outreach and began its efforts in the segment of research and publications. In 1994, the first publications of teachers and students were produced. Pastor Vilmar Emílio González was the first SALT-IAENE teacher to publish a book. At the same time, with the help of Professor Joaquim Azevedo, the seminary’s Biblical Literature Research Center (Centro de Pesquisa de Literatura Bíblica, CePLIB, presently known as Editora do SALT - ESALT [SALT Publisher - ESALT]) was established.

In 1997, SALT-IAENE started *Theological Review* (Revista Teológica) that published articles from its academic community and other interested researchers. The following year, in 1998, the Theologian Support Group (Grupo de Apoio ao Teologando, GATe) was created. Pastor Demóstenes Neves da Silva was the creator and advisor of this project, and the group’s actions sought to assist in solving the financial difficulties faced by students. Currently, GATe functions as a support student organization. In addition to providing direct financial aid, GATe also encourages students to participate in activities that help the financially support their studies, such as canvassing.

In 1999, other initiatives were included in the seminary agenda. For example, in 1999, 2000, and 2001, Theological Weeks was held, addressing the following themes: “The basic principles of prophetic interpretation,” “The Nature of the Church and its mission,” and “The Adventist Church in postmodern times.” Theological Weeks is still held annually and attracts great interest on the part of students.

The first classes of the Master’s in theology program started in December 2000, with a class of 48 students. Pastor Luiz Nunes (former seminary director) and Pastor Wilson Endruveit (former dean of SALT-DSA) were instrumental in opening the master’s studies. In 2005, 35 students graduated from the first group of master’s students, and the second group of 43 students graduated in 2010.

In 2000, *Revista Exegética* (Exegetical Review), an online journal, was created by the former student José Hudson Gomes de Araújo. The last issue was published in 2004. In 2001, *Revista Hermenêutica* (Hermeneutic Review) was launched at the initiative of Pastor Joaquim Azevedo. The journal published articles in the field of biblical exegesis and hermeneutics. In 2003, the first issue of *Theological Review* was published.

In June 2001, the representatives of the Ministry of Education of Brazil visited IAENE to evaluate the theology program following the seminary’s request for accreditation. The accreditation was approved and published in Ordinance no. 1,402 of the Ministry of Education of Brazil on May 9, 2002, and in the Diário Oficial da União (Official Diary of the Union) on May 13, 2002. SALT-IAENE was the first Adventist school in Brazil to obtain government accreditation for its theology program. In 2002, the name of IAENE was changed to its current name Bahia Adventist College (Faculdade Adventista da Bahia, FADBA), and thus the regional headquarters of the seminary
came to be called Bahia Adventist College – FADBA Campus or SALT-FADBA.39

In the following years, the seminary continued with new programs and student activities. The SALT-FADBA administration created the Theologians Prayer Group (Grupo de Oração dos Teologandos, GOTE) in order to provide better spiritual support to seminarians and encourage them to practice prayer as part of their lifestyle. The initiative was successful and GOTE became a permanent project. It continues to provide means of strengthening the students’ personal relationship with God and promote healthy social and family relationships. GOTE conducts various activities such as early morning services, vigils, and prayer groups.40

In the academic field, the seminary continued to hold events that benefit teachers, students, and the community. In partnership with the Geosciences Museum, the Second FADBA Creationists Encounter was held in September 2003. In February 2006, the First Church Growth National Symposium was organized in partnership with the South American Division.41 In addition to holding events, SALT-FADBA participated in the teacher exchange program with Ecuador Adventist College and Mozambique Adventist Seminary. In 2008, for example, the professors from SALT-FADBA taught Science and Bible, intermediate Greek, and Soteriology at Ecuador Adventist College.42

In 2010, SALT-FADBA had 410 students. In order to better prepare these students for the mission field, in 2011 the seminary started to offer a two-year postgraduate program in Missiology. The program offers three lines of research: Urban Mission; Pastoral Counseling; and Bible Interpretation and Teaching. The program is accredited by the Brazilian government and the Seventh-day Adventist Church.43

To stimulate postgraduate research, Revista Práxis Teológica (Theological Praxis Review) was launched in 2011 at the initiative of Professor Adenilton Tavares Aguiar. The first issue of Praxis was launched in collaboration with the Tenth Seminary on the Philosophy of Origins conducted by SALT-FADBA in partnership with the Geoscience Museum. While encouraging academic research, the seminary sought to involve the academic community with the community in general and also with the church. Thus in 2012, the Second Symposium on Small Groups was hosted by the school with the theme of how small groups helped to fulfill the mission in the current times.44 In 2013, the symposium focused on the questions of origins and presented the creationist perspective from an interdisciplinary perspective. At the symposium, which was attended by nearly two thousand people, the book Criacionismo no Século XXI: Uma Abordagem Multidisciplinar (Creationism in the 21st Century: A Multidisciplinary Approach) was launched, organized by Professor Wellington Silva.45

In 2015, SALT-FADBA reached the enrollment of 495 students. The growing student enrollment along with the various programs and events gave the school recognition and importance among the Adventist theology schools in the South American Division and the church in general. In November 2017, for example, the seminary hosted the annual meeting of the Biblical Research Committee for the South American Division, a branch of the General Conference Biblical Research Institute.46 The event, which is held annually, brought together the theologians from eight South American countries as well as the representatives of the Committee and the professors from the Adventist universities from around the world. The main topic was discipleship from biblical, theological, and practical perspectives.47

Historical Role of the Institution

Since its establishment, SALT-FADBA has positively impacted the advancement of the Adventist pastoral ministry in the state of Bahia and northeast Brazil as well as in Brazil and South America and even beyond the continent. Valuing an education that unites theory and practice in preparing students for ministry, the school combines the content presented in the classroom with the pastoral experience in the field. Thus, SALT-FADBA provides its teachers and students with opportunities to participate in various missionary activities, such as week-long evangelism; three-month evangelism; annual theological week; supervised internships; weeks of prayer; symposia; seminars; training; courses; and lectures. The Church Growth Institute (Instituto de Crescimento de Igreja) and the IAENE Mission (Missão Iaenense) are the school’s two important groups that promote and manage mission activities. The Church Growth Institute promotes training, guidance, and support for local church leaders by developing and providing evangelistic materials and resources.48 The Institute also produces bibliographic material which is used in the training programs offered by SALT-FADBA in conjunction with the local churches. Some of these materials are: Guia de Plantio de Igreja (Church Planting Guide) (2007), Diagnose (Diagnosis) (2008), Manual para Evangelistas (Manual for Evangelists) (2009), 21 Dias de Poder (21 Days of Power) (2011), Vidas Que Pregam (Lives That Preach) (2012) and Uma Igreja Que Cresce (A Church that Grows) (2012).49

The IAENE Mission, which is led by the SALT administration and the senior students, promotes wide interaction and integration between the school and the local churches in the state of Bahia and the other nearby states.50 As a result of these efforts, in the years 2014 and 2015, the theology students actively participated in the Projeto Antioquia (Antioch Project), whose main goal was to assist the growth of the Church at the national level. As a result, 5,117 people were baptized and new churches were opened. In 2015 and 2016, one student group was sent to England, where five new members were baptized; another was sent to the African continent, contributing to the baptism of over 400 people there.

In 2019, the SALT-FADBA students did their internship in the area of public evangelism and conducted evangelistic series in all the five regions of Brazil, contributing to 2,367 new baptized members. The largest number of people was reached in the region of the Seminary’s headquarters, the East Brazil Union Mission, with 809 new baptisms. Through these and other efforts, SALT-FADBA remains engaged in the Adventist mission.
Chronology of Directors

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NOTES


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33. Demóstenes Neves da Silva (SALT-FADBA former professor), interviewed by Natan Fernandes Silva, on November 5, 2012.


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