

# G.C. Approves Proposal to Control Theological Education and Theologians with "Endorsement" Policy

By Bonnie Dwyer

When the 1998 Annual Council voted to approve the International Coordination and Supervision of Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial and Theological Education in Brazil, it took some church educators almost completely by surprise. A committee of five, led by General Conference President Robert S. Folkenberg, spent three years developing the proposal. It was not circulated until the pre-sessions two weeks prior to the 1998 Annual Council. The policy sets up a two-tiered review system of theological education at the General Conference and divisional levels. Undergraduate and graduate theology programs as well as faculty will be evaluated by the new review boards, and individual faculty who are authorized to teach in theological programs will be required to go through a process of "denominational endorsement."

Serving with Folkenberg on the drafting committee were: Al McClure, president of the North American Division; Calvin Rock, vice president of the General Conference; Tom Mostert, president of the Pacific Union; and Humberto Rasi, director of education at the General Conference.

Rasi sent a notice with the wording of the new policy to all the directors of education departments and world divisions October 19, after the vote in Brazil had taken place. He noted, "the main motive behind this action of the Annual Council is the desire to maintain and strengthen theological unity in the training of pastors, theologians, Bible/religion teachers, chaplains and church administrators. This becomes urgent in view of the rapid growth of the church around the world and due to the emergence of many programs offering graduate theological education in several educational institutions."

In North America, questions about the procedures set forth in the proposal surfaced as soon as the document was circulated. Some people

asked whether or not the suggested process contradicted the North American Division Working Policy on Higher Education which states, "The government, control, conduct, management, and administration of each of the institutions shall continue to be vested in the board of trustees of such college or university."

The endorsement proposal creates in each division a Board of Ministerial and Theological Education (BMTE) which has been given eight duties including, among others, to:

"Monitor quality assurance and establish

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outcome expectations necessary for employment.

"Review and endorse the recommendation for president/dean/director of one or more candidates identified by an institutional search committee. This search committee should have participation from the institution and from the division. After review and endorsement the recommended candidates will be returned to the institution's administration for submission to the college/university board or council.

"Affirm the faculty authorized to teach in these programs through a process of denominational endorsement implemented by BMTE. This endorsement may be valid for up to five years as long as the faculty member is teaching in the program for which he/she was endorsed, and may be renewed."

University trustees who have been through accreditation processes for their institutions say regional accrediting bodies may question whether college and university trustees do in fact govern the institution if decisions about recruitment, appoint-

ment, retention, promotion, and tenure of faculty are not controlled by trustees without interference from a higher body.

The action taken in Brazil was brought to the delegates at the North American Division meetings in November as an information item. NAD President Al McClure stated there would be no discussion of the item on the floor of the meeting. However, the college and university presidents did discuss the proposal for several hours on their own. According to La Sierra University President Lawrence T. Geraty, not a single president spoke in favor of the policy, and all were present except Loma Linda University President Lyn Behrens who had to be away for an accreditation visit. During their meeting, the presidents decided to prepare a statement on the proposal. After some negotiation and compromise, they were permitted to read their statement at the Division meetings. As originally prepared, the presidents' statement had expressed "deep disappointment" in the process used to develop the original document. In the negotiated

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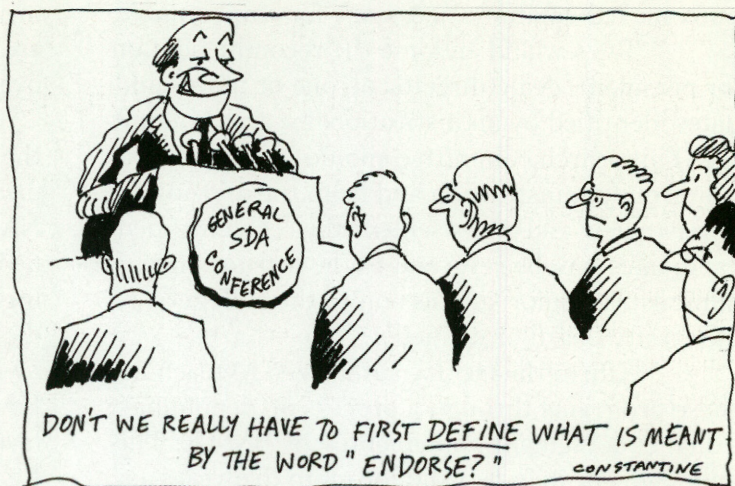
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statement, the wording was changed to say, "We would have hoped that the process used in the development of the original document would have involved more consultation, with those who hire, with those who train, or those who listen to ministers."

Some wording compromises had also been negotiated in Brazil during the pre-sessions, according to Calvin Rock. In the discussion of the curriculum, the term "core curriculum" was changed to "basic subject areas," and the term "credential" was changed to "process of denominational endorsement." Rock added, "Like all other policies, this document is not in cement. Where experience and logic suggest, improvements can be made at any subsequent annual councils."

The educators who were in Brazil negotiated the addition of a clause to the proposal: "Divisions wishing to operate under alternative procedures to those described under paragraphs a) to g) above, may do so provided the following is observed: (1) The alternative procedures lead to the achievement of the same outcomes. (2) The pro-



posed alternative procedures are submitted to and authorized by the IBMTE at its meeting to be held in conjunction with the Annual Council of 1999. (3) Approval is granted by the IBMTE before the alternative procedures are implemented." Officials at the colleges in North America now await the appointment of a committee by Al McClure to take up the discussion of alternative procedures.

## Statement of the North American Division Adventist University and College Presidents In Response to the International Coordination and Supervision of Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial and Theological Education

**I**n a rapidly growing church with increasing diversity we appreciate the need for improving the quality of church ministry and applaud the desire of church leadership to improve the theological formation of the pastors with a sharp focus on the mission and message of our SDA Church.

It is appropriate for the church to set the standards for ministerial training and to invite divisions to apply those standards to their unique territories. We are pleased that our division is about to take up this assignment.

We would have hoped that the process used for the development of the original document would have been prepared with more consultation with those who hire, with those who train and those who listen to ministers.

We are pleased to hear that the division president will convene a committee to address the division specific needs as an alternative procedure for ministerial preparation, and in this connection we recommend the following:

A process that assures broad participation:

- By those who train pastors
- By those who hire pastors and
- By those who listen to the pastors in the pew.



# International Coordination and Supervision of Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial and Theological Education

**RECOMMENDED,** To approve the International Coordination and Supervision of Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial and Theological Education document, which reads as follows:

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, in its 150-year history, has experienced dramatic growth and has entered most nations of the world. The gospel message, as understood by the Church, has been embraced by millions of people from different cultures, enriching the denomination with their diversity. These cultural, national, and linguistic differences present a challenge to maintaining theological unity. The primary way by which the Church fosters a common understanding of its message is through the work of its spiritual leaders—pastors, theologians, Bible/religion teachers, chaplains, and administrators. The Church, through its teaching ministry, needs to continue to preserve its message and mission within this diversity.

## Preserving the Message and Mission

1. The Church has the responsibility of defining the type of training it requires and provides for the ministers, theologians, Bible/religion teachers, and chaplains that it employs in order to carry out its mission. (In this document, these individuals will be referred to, collectively, as leaders in ministerial formation.)
2. This important responsibility will be implemented by representative bodies chosen by division and General Conference leadership and includes decisions on the professional training required for entrance into the practice of ministry in each division, the admission requirements for that training, the basic series of subject areas, the selection and endorsement of the faculty involved, the institutions where such training will be offered, quality assurance, and the professional internship.
3. The need to assure church unity and coordination in these areas has become urgent in view of the international growth of the Church and the development of multiple programs for training leaders in ministerial formation offered by a number of institutions around the world.
4. The General Conference, its world divisions, and educational institutions will work in close cooperation, through interconnected boards, policies, standards, and procedures, to foster unity, determine quality standards, and strengthen focus on the Seventh-day Adventist message and mission in graduate, undergraduate, and other levels of education for leaders in ministerial formation.
5. The framework recommended below builds on the action taken by the 1994 Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee, which placed all graduate programs in ministry, religion, and theology under the direct supervision of the respective world division.<sup>1</sup>
6. This proposal envisages that organizations employing leaders in ministerial formation shall employ individuals who have received their ministerial training in schools/colleges/universities in which the basic series of subject areas and teaching faculty involved have been endorsed as provided for in these guidelines. Any exception shall be voted by the next higher organization.

## Proposal

This proposal envisages the establishment of an integrated structure at both division and General Conference levels; and, where applicable, the replacement of the Ministerial Training Advisory Council. On the basis of the rationale and objectives listed above, the procedures as outlined below are to be followed by the world Church:

1. Each world division shall establish a Board of Ministerial and Theological Education (BMTE) to provide guidance and oversight to all programs for leaders in ministerial formation, such as pastoral ministry, theology, Bible/religion, and chaplaincy offered within its territory.
  - a. Duties:
    - 1) To authorize programs for the development of leaders in ministerial formation, as follows:
      - a) Designate the institution(s) in which professional training for leaders in ministerial formation will be offered.
      - b) Review and recommend to the International Board of Ministerial and Theological Education (IBMTE) (see paragraph 2 below), new undergraduate and graduate



programs for leaders in ministerial formation, as proposed by the institutional boards where such programs are to be offered.

- 2) Recognizing the importance of effective pastoral training, and the vital role of the faculty in achieving that goal, the BMTE, in fulfilling its responsibilities to ensure the highest quality of training for leaders in ministerial formation, will engage in dialogue with the leadership of the relevant departments involved in the programs. Informed by the dialogue as described above, the BMTE will fulfill these responsibilities as follows:
    - a) Establish appropriate requirements for entry to the program of professional training for leaders in ministerial formation.
    - b) Stipulate such additional basic subject areas, to those determined by IBMTE, as may meet its division's specific needs for all students in pastoral ministry, theology, Bible/religion, and chaplaincy.
    - c) Provide guidance to each institution on the design of the overall curriculum for the training of leaders in ministerial formation.
    - d) Monitor quality assurance and establish outcome expectations necessary for employment.
    - e) Design the internship for each of these professional areas referenced in b) above.
    - f) Review and endorse the recommendation for president/dean/director of one or more candidates identified by an institutional search committee. This search committee should have participation from the institution and from the division. After review and endorsement the recommended candidate(s) will be returned to the institution's administration for submission to the college/university board or council.
    - g) Affirm the faculty authorized to teach in these programs through a process of denominational endorsement implemented by BMTE (see paragraph 2. a. 3) below). This endorsement may be valid for up to five years as long as the faculty member is teaching in the program for which he/she was endorsed, and may be renewed.
    - h) Divisions wishing to operate under alternative procedures to those described under paragraphs a) to g) above, may do so provided the following is observed:
      - (1) The alternative procedures lead to the achievement of the same outcomes.
      - (2) The proposed alternative procedures are submitted to and authorized by the IBMTE at its meeting to be held in conjunction with the Annual Council of 1999.
      - (3) Approval is granted by the IBMTE before the alternative procedures are implemented.
  - 3) To monitor the implementation of the goals and objectives of Seventh-day Adventist training for leaders in ministerial formation.
- b. The membership of the BMTE shall be as follows:
- Division President (chairman)
  - Division Vice President or Secretary (vice-chairman)
  - Department of Education Director (secretary)
  - Ministerial Association Secretary (associate secretary)
  - Division Treasurer
  - Appropriate representation from union/conference leadership
  - Appropriate representation from relevant institutional training programs
  - Experienced pastors
  - Active lay persons

Members will be appointed by the division executive committee and will serve on staggered three-year terms, to ensure continuity. Members may be appointed to serve for more than one term.



c. Meetings:

The BMTE will meet at least once a year to conduct its business.

2. The General Conference shall establish an International Board of Ministerial and Theological Education (IBMTE) to work with the divisions' Boards of Ministerial and Theological Education in coordinating and supervising all undergraduate and graduate programs in pastoral ministry, theology, Bible/religion, and chaplaincy offered by the Church.

a. Duties:

- 1) To establish the general goals and objectives for Seventh-day Adventist undergraduate and graduate education for leaders in ministerial formation in the world field.
- 2) To establish a basic series of subject areas, international guidelines, standards and policies for admission, and faculty selection that will meet the needs of the field and foster the mission of the Church through undergraduate and graduate programs for leaders in ministerial formation.
- 3) To provide guidelines to be used by BMTEs for faculty endorsement and to design the faculty application procedure. The IBMTE will consider, for approval, both the guidelines and application procedure at its meeting in conjunction with the 1999 Annual Council.
- 4) To arrange for surveys and to grant recognition to the new programs for leaders in ministerial formation recommended by the respective division BMTE.
- 5) To facilitate the exchange of endorsed faculty from among the recognized programs offered in the world divisions.
- 6) To grant or to renew denominational endorsement for faculty at General Conference institutions who teach courses for leaders in ministerial formation.

- b. Institutions in which the approved programs are offered shall follow the normal process for accreditation from the Adventist Accrediting Association.

c. Membership:

\*General Conference President or designee (chairman)

\*General Conference Vice Presidential Advisor for Education and  
Vice Presidential Advisor for the Ministerial Association (co-vice-chairmen)

\*Department of Education Director (secretary)

\*Ministerial Association Secretary (associate secretary)

\*General Conference Secretary

\*General Conference Treasurer

\*Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries Director

\*Biblical Research Institute Director

Division Presidents

Additional members selected from among college/university board chairmen, presidents, presidents/deans of graduate programs in the divisions, department chairmen of undergraduate programs in ministry, religion, or theology, and individuals experienced in religious education.

\*Members of the Executive Committee of the IBMTE plus up to five individuals appointed by the IBMTE.

d. Meetings:

The IBMTE will meet at least once a year to conduct business.

#### ENDNOTES

1 1994 Annual Council Action, 286-94G Graduate Ministerial/Religious/Theological Education Programs  
-To be Under Supervision of General Conference or Division

**"RECOMMENDED,** To place all graduate ministerial/religious/theological education degree programs offered by church colleges and universities under the responsibility and supervision of either the General Conference (for Andrews University) or the respective division, in order to strengthen the worldwide unity and mission focus of these programs."

"New graduate ministerial/religious/theological education degree programs may be initiated only with the formal approval of the respective division and the International Board of Education."