

IS THERE A REAL DOCTOR IN THE CHURCH?

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ALTERNATIVES TO DECEPTION

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BILL GROVER

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In memory of Robert Cook, Th.D. Dallas Theological Seminary, 1
who planted in me a love for Christology at Western Seminary 2
in the early 1990s. Thanks, Bob. 3

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WHY I WROTE THIS LITTLE BOOK

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There is a great deception going on in the church. Dishonest people are claiming doctorates without doing rigorous, doctoral level studies. The 14th century practice of designating an eminent theologian as “doctor” has been eclipsed by a horde of graduates acquiring the title by completing very modest educational activities in poor seminaries. In contrast to those individuals who by doing years of demanding research and exhaustive coursework do advanced degrees in schools of genuine rigor, it has become popular for a great number of those in ministry to take graduate degrees in unaccredited schools, which are mostly very subpar. Such schools award degrees with the very same nomenclature as accredited institutions use (Ph.D., Th.D., D. Min.). These “doctors” complete simplified goals requiring little effort. Such seminaries supposedly anoint their graduates with proficiency in Bible exposition and theology. They do not. It is time to expose this deception which stains the credibility of our Faith.

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In the early 1960’s in San Diego there was a middle-aged man in our congregation who I think possibly suffered from a poor self-concept. Or, instead, maybe, his unwarranted

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1 self- importance required the mantle of a doctorate to illumi-
2 nate his “capabilities” to others. So, he purchased a doctoral
3 degree in Bible from a degree mill to “prove” himself. When it
4 arrived in a few days, he preferred that everyone address him
5 as “Dr. Herb Brown” (not his real name) and, no doubt, hoped
6 that he could find a responsible place of service in the church
7 because he now had the coveted doctoral degree in Bible. “So
8 what?” one might ask. Who is Herb hurting?

9 Possibly no one else in Herb’s social interaction at that time
10 was affected in a bad way by Herb’s self-aggrandizement be-
11 cause his position in the church was not changed. He was not
12 given new responsibilities in the congregation or increased
13 opportunities to enlighten us with purchased erudition and
14 eloquence. But what if he had? What if his bought degree had
15 earned him a ministry? What if the church had said, “Herb,
16 now that you are a doctor in Bible, please enlighten us with
17 your incredible knowledge of the Word”?

18 Would that local church be able to discriminate between
19 informed, competent teaching of the Scripture and that which
20 is not informed and is not competent? A few members per-
21 haps could, but for most others that is unlikely. How many in
22 your own church can efficiently refute false teaching (Romans
23 16:17) or understand Christian theology sufficiently to explain
24 and hold to the traditions (2 Thessalonians 2:15) or are energet-
25 ically motivated to advance in doctrinal acumen (Colossians
26 1:10) or become really biblically informed (1 Thessalonians
27 4:13) so as to not be confused about what doctrine is true and
28 what is not (2 Thessalonians 2:3)?

29 Yet, if church members are lacking in such accomplish-
30 ments and skills it is not necessarily their own fault. The

medical profession does not expect their clients to heal themselves. Neither should church members be expected to do the majority of the work to teach themselves. Living a good life, reading the Bible, praying often, attending worship, financially supporting one's church, being faithful to one's spouse all these and much more are within a believer's duties and capacities, but teaching oneself Christian theology and the meaning of more complicated biblical texts can be challenging. So, it becomes the responsibility of the pastor, elder, Bible teacher or evangelist to do that. That is the clear teaching of Paul:

And He gave the apostles, the prophets,, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers to equip the saints for the work of the ministry for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine... (Ephesians 4:11-14 ESV)

That goal of teaching knowledge about the Son of God and unifying believers in the teachings of the true faith is the primary function of the ministry: teach the doctrines of the apostles (1 Timothy 2:2), correct false teaching (1 Timothy 6:3), labor in teaching (1 Timothy 5:17). It is not solely up to the members of a congregation to validate a preacher's abilities; it is the duty of the preacher, himself, to see to it that he is fully

1 and competently trained in the Bible and Christian doctrine
2 so that he can efficiently lead his people into an understand-
3 ing of the deeper things of God's Word and in the articles our
4 Faith. As the apostle Paul commands,

5 Make every effort to present yourself before
6 God as a proven worker who does not need to
7 be ashamed, teaching the message of truth ac-
8 curately (2 Timothy 2:15, ESV).

9 And how is the Bible teacher or preacher to "make every
10 effort"? How does he get the skills to "teach the message of
11 truth accurately"? Is it by buying a doctorate? Is it by weasel-
12 ing out an "advanced" degree but doing only a small fraction
13 of the work required to get a real degree? Is it by claiming that
14 he really has earned the same award that others have worked
15 so hard to earn, but he, in reality, has not- not by a long shot.
16 Is it by graduating from a seminary or a graduate school of re-
17 ally low quality? Are these the ways to "make every effort"?
18 No, these are the ways of the deceived or the deceivers. These
19 are the ways of misrepresentation and fraud. Where are the
20 Christian principles? Where is the need to be upright and
21 truthful? Do not claim graduate level degrees unless you have
22 genuinely done graduate level work.

23 Surely the reader can see that doing only a third or less of
24 the work which others do to reach an academic level of pro-
25 ficiency and then claiming the competency normally associ-
26 ated with such higher academic awards is deceitful. It is un-
27 fair to the many men and women who put forth the difficult
28 and diligent effort to earn such degrees. It is unfair to churches

who hire such graduates as the churches likely are not being 1
exposed to the teaching of one educated with the proper rigor. 2
It is unfair to the study of our Faith as it misrepresents what 3
is really required to understand it at the highest levels. It is 4
unfair to theological education as it suggests that unlike the 5
common requirements to become proficient in other profes- 6
sions as college instruction, health services or the legal profes- 7
sion, church leaders who care for the souls of their flock are to 8
be approved even if the rigor of their learning is dwarfed by 9
that of other professionals. Yes, it is unfair to the disciplines 10
taught in seminary or graduate school too as biblical exposi- 11
tion or theology since it suggests that gaining knowledge in 12
these areas requires much less effort than they actually do. Let 13
me illustrate what I mean by the last point and what acquiring 14
a solid, advanced grasp of the Bible looks like. 15

Suppose a person takes a seminary level class in the Gospel 16
of John. The rigor between seminaries can be very uneven; 17
some require rigor, some do not. That is the point of my writ- 18
ing. But what does advanced learning on John include? Let's 19
particularize and say that one wants to get a good understand- 20
ing to teach or preach on John 1:18 which in the ESV reads, 21
"No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's 22
side, He has made Him known." Here are a few questions on 23
just this single verse which one with a genuine graduate de- 24
gree in Bible or Theology should be aware of and which are 25
certainly related to one's preparation to write a sermon or les- 26
son on this text. 27

First, we do not have the Greek original of the Gospel of 28
John. We only have early copies. But among these copies 29
there are differences in the Greek text in John 1:18. Some 30

1 copies read “only God” (*monogenēs theos*) and others read
2 “only Son” (*monogenēs huios*).¹ Which is more likely correct
3 and why? This involves doing textual research in the origi-
4 nal biblical language of the New Testament which in my ex-
5 perience was taught in Master of Divinity level of seminary
6 studies at Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon in the early
7 1990s. But deciding on the original reading is required to grasp
8 the author’s intended meaning, and thus it is very relevant in
9 sermon or lesson preparation. If you don’t know what John
10 wrote, how can you preach on John? This illustrates the rela-
11 tion between a thorough education and correct teaching and
12 preaching.

13 Second, the Greek term translated “only” in the ESV is
14 *monogenēs*. But in the King James, and other translations that
15 Greek word is rendered “only begotten.” Which translation is
16 correct and why? This is a problem dealing with the seman-
17 tics of original language of the New Testament, and such is-
18 sues should be covered in master level seminary studies as
19 well. It is not beyond the scope of such learning to inquire,
20 for example, how the 3rd. century B.C. Greek translation of the
21 Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint, uses *monogenēs* as an equiva-
22 lent of the Hebrew *yahid*, or, what are the four locations and
23 usages of the compound adjective in John’s Gospel, or how is it
24 used in Luke, or how is it used in Hebrews, or how is it used in
25 first John. Of course, one cannot and need not go over such is-
26 sues in a thirty- minute sermon or even an hour of teaching in
27 adult Sunday School. But the preacher should have learned in
28 seminary why and how to research such details in order to as-
29 sure himself that what he preaches is actually biblical. Again,
30 observe how learning is related to ministry.

Third, were the correct translation “only begotten” then 1
that seems supportive of the doctrine of eternal generation 2
taught in Protestant belief statements as the Westminster 3
Confession and in the early church creeds of the 4th and 5th 4
centuries of Nicaea and Chalcedon.² Should one preparing to 5
preach or teach this verse be ignorant of the statements of 6
faith of the church regarding this tenet--in part based on texts 7
as John 1:18-- which millions, even the majority, of believers 8
through the centuries have endorsed because he is uneducat- 9
ed on the history of Christian beliefs? Note that I am not say- 10
ing that eternal generation is a correct belief. I am saying that 11
a minister should understand what evangelicals have taught 12
about the God’s Son who is the Subject of John 1:18. That un- 13
derstanding is relevant to teaching the verse. 14

Should churches exist in a vacuum doctrinally separated 15
from the believers who have loved, worshipped, lived, and 16
died for their Savior in centuries past because their minister 17
“Dr. Jones” does not know up from down about the tenets of 18
the Faith in which he claims to be educated? 19

This text is about the very Center of our faith, Jesus Christ 20
the Son of God our precious Lord. We must understand the 21
verse if we are going to preach on it. 22

How can one ethically claim to have the academic profi- 23
ciency required to be a “doctor” in theology or in Bible but be 24
unable to interact with of the teachings of a great percentage 25
of the church about how God the Son relates to God the Father? 26
Must the minister relate to his or her flock all the opining over 27
the centuries regarding what John 1:18 teaches? Of course not. 28
But if some church members hold in their hands a translation 29
which reads “only begotten Son” and others have translations 30

1 which read “only Son,” shouldn’t “Dr.” Jones, the preacher, well
2 understand the meaning of the Greek word and how the trans-
3 lation “only begotten Son” has contributed, rightly or wrongly,
4 to Christology and so, therefore, to the content of his sermon
5 or lesson preparation? Learning relates to ministry.

6 Yes, I know, and have experienced, the trend in preaching
7 only sermons about how Christians should live and not about
8 what Christians should believe. But that is not Scriptural.
9 Read for example Romans where the majority of the apos-
10 tle’s instruction is teaching the doctrines of sin and salvation.
11 Read the Thessalonian letters where Paul explains the Second
12 Coming. Read Colossians where the deity of our Lord Jesus is
13 the topic. This is theology.

14 But back to the issues regarding John 1:18. Some of these is-
15 sues on the verse could be briefly remarked on and simplified
16 in ten minutes or noted in a handout:

17 “Translations differ on this text, let me briefly explain
18 why...”

19 “There are different ways to understand how Christ is the
20 Son of God, these include...”

21 “It is likely that the original of John 1:18 is calling Jesus
22 “God” because...”

23 The minister’s objective is not to keep his people in the dark
24 and poorly informed; it is to open their minds up to the deeper
25 meaning of God’s Word. But to regularly do even ten minutes
26 of quality, but simplified, instruction on complex topics can
27 require years of rigorous learning. What is meant by “eternal
28 generation”? It is a doctrine favored by many³ but, others re-
29 ject the doctrine of the Son’s eternal generation.⁴ What are the
30 reasons for doing that? This is a subject suitable to historical

and systematic theology which should be covered at the master's level of seminary instruction. Yes, ministers are limited due to the advent of thirty- minute sermons; they cannot venture much into the complex issues. But understanding the difficult questions involved in Bible exposition should be a requirement in sermon preparation.

Fourth, so, in what manner is Christ the Son of God? Is it that He is eternally begotten as some say? In contrast, one group of theologians states that being "Son" instead means that Christ is eternally role subordinate to the Father.⁵ But another group says being Son means that the pre- existent Christ is equal in authority with the Father.⁶ Yet still another states that Christ's sonship began with His human birth.⁷ Which is correct and why? Can the preacher proficiently teach about God's Son without knowing what the phrase even means? Isn't it clear that to simply grasp the possible nuances of the title "Son of God," a common New Testament designation of our Lord, can be a profound undertaking made possible by the preparation provided in good seminary instruction? Yet, many "doctors" in the church know little about such issues because their training is subpar. How many even care enough to do the work to understand? Caring is not only about ministering it is also about getting ready to minister.

The reader should understand that grasping the meaning of some Scriptures is complex and that it requires considerable training. This is not the case, of course, in basic salvation texts. But the number of issues just referenced in the single verse of John 1:18 should be multiplied hundreds of times when acquiring a thorough learning of the Scriptures in the areas of the doctrines of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, inspiration, sin,

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1 salvation, sanctification, the offices and ordinances of the
2 church, the after- life, and future events. One should realize
3 that it is not just about getting an advanced degree; it is about
4 doing the advanced work. And, the work is hard.

5 I write this book to reveal that many are just not doing the
6 hard work. Deceit is going on in the education of many church
7 leaders and in the degrees they claim to have earned. Many in
8 the church are unaware or fooled by this. But can deception
9 about anything honor Christ? Has God called us to misrepre-
10 sent our learning?

11 Are ignorance and deceit fruits of the Spirit?

WHY EVEN GO TO SEMINARY?

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Pastoral training, of course is not all about learning intricate theology, biblical languages, and complex hermeneutics. It also includes practical studies as how to effectively deliver completed sermons, church planting, and pastoral counseling. It may be that that instruction in such could be efficiently done by professors with a great deal of experience rather than by teachers with a great deal of formal education. So that raises a question.

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The benefit of seminary education has been contested. Gary North's diatribe against seminary learning⁸ can be summarized in five claims to which this present writer will respond:

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(1) The seminary is staffed with unsuccessful pastors.

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But on the contrary, while much of the coursework in a seminary as languages, theology, and church history may be done by those who have not been pastors, coursework in preaching, pastoral counseling, personal evangelism, and church planting are generally taught by those with considerable successful practical experience in these areas.

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1 (2) Seminary professors mix the teaching of theology with
2 pagan philosophy.

3 But this would not be a correct observation in evangeli-
4 cal schools where systematic doctrines are based on the ex-
5 egesis of Scripture and Christian beliefs not pagan religion.
6 Three of my fondest memories of my Master of Divinity train-
7 ing are from in classes on a portion of the Old Testament, on
8 the Person of Christ, and in Greek exegesis of Romans and
9 Galatians. In the first, we energetically studied the Minor
10 Prophets, and through that I became convinced that a certain
11 position on Jesus' Second Coming was scriptural. No pagan
12 teaching there. In the other course our good professor seated
13 us around him in a semi- circle and asked us questions on the
14 history of Christology which we had read at home. No pagan
15 teaching there. Just things about Jesus. In the third, we read
16 and translated two New Testament Books from the Greek and
17 did minor exegetical tasks. No pagan stuff there either.

18 (3) Seminaries require applicants to have undergraduate
19 degrees in secular subjects.

20 But this clearly cannot be evidenced by a perusal of semi-
21 nary entry requirements where undergraduate work in ei-
22 ther Christian studies or secular studies is fully acceptable.
23 Western Seminary, for example, requires a bachelor's degree
24 in any subject from an accredited seminary with a 2.5 grade
25 point average. One who advised me on my Th. D. dissertation
26 and who had graduated from Dallas Theological Seminary
27 had his undergraduate work in horticulture. I will say that
28 in my opinion, a B.A. in Bible is an excellent foundation to do
29 seminary work.

(4) What students face in classrooms is far from day to day 1
problems in ministry. 2

This observation could be argued as having some merit. 3
Many challenges in running a church are not likely to be in- 4
volved with the declension of a Greek substantive or whether 5
the human nature of Christ has a faculty of will in distinction 6
from His divine nature. But being informed on such as these 7
could at times have an influence on the understanding of one 8
called to lead his church members into definitive Christian 9
truth by his preaching and teaching ministry. 10

Doing that is, after all, is a pastor's primary responsibility 11
according to Paul. 12

(5) Much of what is taught in seminary is forgotten in a few 13
years 14

Yet, while some learning as the biblical languages certain- 15
ly would be eroded over time unless often used, the basics of 16
how and what to study and how to minister should not be 17
forgotten. 18

What North advances instead of seminary training is an 19
apprenticeship system where a pastor teaches a pastor to 20
be "the ropes." Yet how many pastors are able to educate in 21
the biblical languages or systematic theology or the exegetical 22
procedures useful in sermon preparation or the history 23
of denominations and their theological individuality, or the 24
formation of the doctrine of Christ in the first five centuries 25
or heresies and cults or Christian apologetics? But all of these 26
could be useful as backgrounds and topics for preaching and 27
teaching. Still an internship of sorts might prove valuable. In 28
some states prospective school teachers practice teaching un- 29
der experienced school teachers before credentialing. 30

1 To assess whether North's claim, that much of what learn-
2 ing is acquired in seminary is unnecessary and /or is avail-
3 able through apprenticeship, one may note just a summarized
4 portion of a particular seminary's stated goals in both cogni-
5 tive and affective domains: The learner will demonstrate an
6 understanding of: (1) the background, history, contents, and
7 major teachings of Scripture, (2) methods and skills utilized in
8 the interpretation and application of Scripture, (3) the original
9 languages of the Bible, (4) the broad outline of the history of
10 the Christian faith, (5) the essential doctrines of Christian the-
11 ology,(6) the application of the Christian faith to moral issues ,
12 (7) the principles and processes of sermon preparation and de-
13 livery, 8) principles, approaches, and skills utilized in leading
14 and equipping persons for service in the church,(9) submission
15 to God's leadership, (10) commitment to biblical models of ser-
16 vant leadership, (11) respect for the worth and uniqueness of
17 all persons, (12) commitment to acts of love and compassion
18 for others, and, (13) commitment to the church's commission
19 to spread the Gospel.⁹ In the present writer's opinion these are
20 commendable goals and many of them would be quite beyond
21 the tutoring ability of most pastors.

22 I would like to note the academic requirements to be em-
23 ployed in other professions. I have 35 years of experience
24 in public school teaching. In 1969 the California Standard
25 Teaching Credential required a five- year, full-time program
26 in a regionally accredited school. First a student completes a
27 four- year B.A. degree in the subject which he or she intend-
28 ed to teach. Mine was in English education. Then a fifth year
29 was required in courses as psychology and how to teach. I lat-
30 er opted to get a second credential in teaching handicapped

learners. This required a sixth year of study in an accredited school. But why should a teacher of junior high students learning disabled students be required to do more rigorous training than some ministers claiming doctorates from unsatisfactory institutions? Yet, I promise you that the effort required to earn a teaching degree in 1969 was far less than completing the requirements to get even a M. Div. degree in 1994 from a genuinely accredited seminary.

Perhaps comparable in rigor to the standard degree for pastoring from an accredited seminary is the master's degree in family therapy from the Thomas Jefferson University. In order to qualify for this award, which enables one to counsel marriage partners, one first must complete a B.A. from an accredited school with a 3.0 GPA then do a two-year, 66 unit master's degree at Thomas Jefferson. But why should one handling God's sacred Word be allowed to do much easier work to learn how to serve the church than one counseling married couples?

And most of us know what is required to take the BAR exam for lawyers to be. It requires three hard years after the B.A. just to make wills or chase ambulances. Yes, I know I'm now being a bit fatuitous. I'm sorry. I know lawyers may handle difficult issues. But my point is that while the training of lawyers requires substantial time and effort, many claiming advanced degrees in religion content themselves by completing simple programs of study in quite less than wonderful institutions which require only the completing of easy objectives. I will soon demonstrate this below.

One who desires to preach and teach cannot abide by the apostolic injunction to become adequately prepared if he

1 avoids rigorous training. Note just one example: 1 Timothy 6:3
2 warns us to be aware of false teaching. “If anyone teaches a
3 different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words
4 of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with
5 godliness...”

6 Probably the “sound words” are teachings about Jesus not
7 the words of Jesus in the Gospels.¹⁰ Modern Christians in many
8 parts of the world are exposed to an assortment of errors
9 about the Person of Christ through the increasing numbers
10 of false Christological doctrines taught by the many modern
11 cults. Heresies can be spread through media as tracts, books,
12 radio, and television. Churches teaching unbiblical represen-
13 tations regarding Christ’s nature are found in towns and cit-
14 ies. It is incumbent on the church leaders to be aware of false
15 teaching and have the competency to expose the errors of it.
16 Consider for example how The New World (Jehovah Witness)
17 Translation renders Titus 2:13 as “the great God and of our
18 Savior, Jesus Christ.” A pastor should have the competence
19 to understand why that version is not faithful in translating
20 a Greek grammaticism correctly and to be able to explain to
21 his or her congregation why the syntax of the New World
22 Translation is wrong here as it separates the nouns “God” from
23 “Christ.” This is basic M. Div. level “stuff,” but I think many
24 claiming doctoral degrees in Bible are ignorant of a common
25 rule regarding how to translate a phrase using two singular
26 nouns of the same case, the first being articulated and the sec-
27 ond not, when they are connected by the conjunction *kai* But
28 grasping that is important to understanding and teaching or
29 preaching on Titus 2:13. Why should a church member hear-
30 ing a sermon on this text not understand why his neighbor, a

Jehovah Witness, reads a wrong translation of Titus 2:13? See 1
how learning relates to ministry? Why should the preacher be 2
unable to explain that? 3

Or consider an issue presently dividing many modern 4
evangelicals.¹¹ Does the Son eternally obey the Father? Two of 5
a number of questions associated with this debate are wheth- 6
er the divine simplicity of God disproves the Son's eternal role 7
subordination and whether the incarnated Son has a human 8
center through which He experiences, wills, and acts. "Well 9
who preaches on such stuff, one asks? Let's instead preach on 10
being a good neighbor instead." 11

But perhaps such questions should be preached about. Do 12
we not want to do our best to understand the nature of the 13
Trinity as whether one Person in God is sovereign over another 14
Person in God or whether each is equal in every way? Is it 15
not appropriate to teach how the Persons in the Trinity relate 16
to each other? And do we not want to grasp the extent of Jesus' 17
humanity over which even evangelicals argue? Shouldn't we 18
want to know how human Jesus is? Don't we want to under- 19
stand texts as Hebrews 2:14, "Therefore as the children share 20
in flesh and blood, He likewise shared in their humanity"? 21

Presenting your body as a sacrifice (Romans 12:1) includes 22
your brain! 23

Yes, these, and many other issues are difficult. And, I'd wa- 24
ger that many touting their "advanced" doctorates in Theology 25
from unaccredited schools know very little about them. How 26
will one arrive at an understanding of texts as John 6:38, "I 27
have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the 28
will of the one who sent Me" (NET BIBLE), unless the one thinks 29
about the wills in God or whether Christ has two wills? The 30

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1 reason to do the hard work in seminary is so one can do good
2 work in preaching and teaching. And buying a doctorate or
3 getting one by exerting minimal effort is not going to prepare
4 one to understand dyothelitism, monophysitism or the new
5 evangelical subordinationism. Again, grasping such weighty
6 issues is what directs one's teaching ministry about the Son of
7 God. No, church members do not need text book learning in
8 Christology, but you do if you are going to teach your church
9 well. Getting a doctorate from Skipoverthehardstuff Seminary
10 is not going to enable you interpret the Bible proficiently and
11 to comprehend the tenets of the Faith.

ACCREDITATION

2

Accreditation at least in part is intended to supervise the programs of institutions to assure that a substantial conformity of rigor exists among accredited schools. Why would it be proper for one school to offer a degree having the same nomenclature as another school but with far lower requirements for graduation? Genuine accreditors in the United States are themselves “accredited” by one of two government sources. One is the U.S. Department of Education and the other is The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). These sources recognize six regional accreditors: (1) The Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges; (2) The New England Association of Schools and Colleges; (3) The North Central Association of Schools and Colleges; (4) The Southern Association of Schools and Colleges; (5) The North West Association of Schools and Colleges, and (6) The Western Association of Schools and Colleges.¹² Regional often is deemed to be the most prestigious sort of accreditation.¹³

In addition to regional is national accreditation which includes among others The Association for Higher Biblical Accreditation (ABHE), The Distance Educating Commission (DEAC), and The Transnational Association of Christian

1 Colleges and Schools (TRACS). The equivalency of national
2 accreditation with regional accreditation is debated. One site
3 argues that nationally accredited schools are less rigorous and
4 that coursework is not transferable to regionally accredited
5 institutions.¹⁴ The other position is that education in nation-
6 ally accredited schools is not inferior, and that in all cases an
7 institution may accept or not accept transfer credit regardless
8 of whether the transcripts are from a nationally or regionally
9 accredited school.¹⁵ I will make this comment: the supervisor
10 of my Doctor of Ministry thesis-project in a regionally accred-
11 ited university also is a professor in a TRACS (national accred-
12 itation) accredited seminary. Having known and respected
13 him for over 20 years, I am sure that the quality of his instruc-
14 tion does not vary whether he is teaching in the regional or in
15 the national accredited schools. Additionally, for the accredi-
16 tation of seminaries, there is the well-accepted Association of
17 Accredited Schools (ATS) which accredits about 250 seminar-
18 ies in the U.S. and Canada . DEAC, TRACS, and the ATS stan-
19 dards for accreditation can be viewed online.

20 Schools outside of North America are often judged on
21 “Generally Accepted Accreditation Principles” (GAAP). GAAP
22 allows institutions to evaluate the quality of foreign degrees.
23 There are some teaching in American accredited seminaries
24 with only GAAP doctorates.

25 Seven Advantages of Doing Accredited Graduate Degrees

26 1. rigor of instruction on particular subject matter...but pos-
27 sibly not soundness of technique

What is going to become evident below in comments on unaccredited seminaries is that faculty members of such, nearly exclusively have unaccredited doctorates, often from the same institution in which they teach. And the difference in learning between having done the work for an accredited graduate degree versus an unaccredited one can be considerable. I prove this below. Consequently, one learning from a graduate of a school of lesser quality very likely is getting an education of lesser quality.

But a caveat is that knowing what to teach is not the equivalent of knowing how to teach. I confess that sometimes in graduate education in theology it was not clear what the exact objectives of instruction were, what the benchmarks were that indicated a solid absorption of the materials and lessons, and what the particulars were of how the acquisition of learning was to be measured. It generally seemed that no lesson plans were being followed. I think it quite possible that some professors with unaccredited doctorates may do a good job in teaching what they know. But, the real question is, what do they know? Both the knowledge of one's subject and the ability to communicate that knowledge well are foundational to good teaching.

2. transfer of credits and degrees

It is factual that some unaccredited seminaries use the rouse to prospective students that an accredited school is just as likely to accept transfer students from an unaccredited institution as from an accredited one. That is patently incorrect. Yes, my experience was different. Not understanding, and not caring either, in the early 1960's, nearly immediately after my conversion, I enrolled in an unaccredited Bible college. It

1 later became accredited. After graduation I was accepted into
2 a graduate program in an accredited Christian university. But
3 this is atypical and probably very rare now in 2020 sixty years
4 later.

5 One doing an unaccredited degree might say, "I don't plan
6 to do further education anyway, so I'm not worried about
7 transferring after graduation to an advanced program in an
8 accredited school." Now this is curious. Has God told us what
9 exactly may be in our future? Could God not have a plan for
10 us that we are not yet aware? I promise you that when I was
11 twenty, even when I was fifty, I did not anticipate being a
12 Bible teacher online for a seminary in South Africa when I
13 was seventy or be writing this when I am eighty. So, choose
14 wisely. Be prepared. God uses what we have. Anticipate God's
15 blessing of giving you a broader calling which may require ad-
16 vanced work in an accredited school. Our gracious God uses
17 what we have.

18 3. availability of relevant courses

19 Another common disadvantage of most graduate programs
20 in Theology and Bible in unaccredited schools is that courses
21 vital to a good education in these subjects is not offered. One,
22 for example, can peruse the catalogues of unaccredited semi-
23 naries and seldom find courses in Greek and Hebrew grammar
24 and exegesis. "Word studies" yes, exegesis no. But such sub-
25 jects are commonly taught as requirements in the curriculum
26 of divinity programs in accredited schools. Even if over the
27 years one forgets how to conjugate verbs or parse sentences
28 in Greek, one can retain the ability to comprehend commen-
29 taries or systematic theologies which explain insights on the
30 meanings of biblical texts in the biblical languages. How can

anyone possibly think that is unimportant? Some ability in 1
these languages would clearly relate to the preparation of ser- 2
mons and the teaching of the Bible to adults. Again, quality in 3
education is a basis for quality in ministry. You cannot teach 4
what you do not know. 5

4. commitment and preparation to do lifelong learning. 6

Learning should not stop after graduation. One should, 7
therefore, become equipped to learn on his own. Instrumental 8
to that is becoming enabled to do serious study by learning 9
what the questions or problems are in the subject being re- 10
searched and the materials and ways to answer those ques- 11
tions to solve those problems. Becoming able to do that would 12
best be achieved where a graduate's coursework required the 13
diligent effort infrequently in evidence in the instruction oc- 14
curring in subpar seminaries. Lightweight theological degrees 15
produce lightweight theologians. 16

5. Broader general learning 17

My Arminian brethren hopefully will forgive me for shar- 18
ing this story. I will be suggesting that in the possible effects 19
there is a parallel between being indoctrinated, in a friendly 20
manner, in a denominational school and being poorly edu- 21
cated in far less than wonderful seminaries. When I gradu- 22
ated from Bible college in 1964, in San Diego there were no ac- 23
credited seminaries or Christian universities. So, I drove from 24
San Diego to Pasadena to attend Pasadena College, a Nazarene 25
school for two years several times a week. This later became 26
Point Loma University. There I, a fledging Calvinist, enrolled 27
in an advanced two- semester course in the writings and dog- 28
ma of Jacobus Arminius- three huge volumes. Yes, that was a 29
bit of an indoctrination. I mean, I was not taught anything at 30

1 Pasadena which was contrary or challenging to Wesleyanism.
2 So, my learning was limited by my instruction. With like con-
3 sequences teaching in many unaccredited schools because of
4 poor curriculum, low standards, and unqualified professors
5 curtail the growth of knowledge.

6 6. satisfaction that one has done his personal best.

7 I think it very likely that one beginning his theological edu-
8 cation would not have researched much what educational op-
9 portunities are available and which will produce the best re-
10 sults. That was certainly my experience. I was nineteen-year
11 old “beach bum” and a high school dropout. But after com-
12 pleting one’s sojourn in his graduation program one may look
13 back. And, what will he see? What will he remember? Will
14 he know that he has been tested and proven to be up to the
15 challenges of grasping difficult subjects which prepare him ef-
16 ficiently teach the Bible and theology? Will he really believe
17 he has done his best for the Master? Or will he instead look
18 back and know and feel the disappointment that he chose the
19 lower path, the easy route, to get the degree and that by com-
20 parison his effort was miniscule to others who have the same
21 degree but who did the real work? Will he realize his decep-
22 tion and be saddened?

23 7. ability to be open and above board about credentials

24 And finally, one with accredited degrees does not have
25 to confess to a person who understands accreditation that
26 his work was done in an unaccredited school which in gen-
27 eral means a substandard school. He can be introduced, in the
28 proper social context, as “Dr. Smith” and not have the emptied
29 feeling that he is not a real doctor in the church, that his title
30 instead is actually a sham, that his degree is a vanity.

Yet even with the availability of accredited schools located throughout the country, many opt instead to attend unaccredited seminaries or schools with unrecognized accreditation. Why is that? Perhaps there are several reasons: (1) It may take a shorter period of time to earn the degree, (2) Credit for life experience is sometimes given in unaccredited schools. That means a prospective student might be required to do less work for a degree because of past experience. (3) Unaccredited schools generally have far less tuition. (4) the meaning and value and of accreditation is not understood by many. For example, a number of unaccredited seminaries tout the fact that the legislature in the state which they are located has granted the school a religious exemption to operate. Many wrongly suppose that the state actually evaluates the educational quality of the school. In practically no cases does the state do that. State “approval” refers only to the legality of a school not to the quality of it.

Other reasons may include (5) In some cases, students may opt for an unaccredited school because that school may be less selective in their admission requirements for entering graduate programs. To be accepted in some doctoral programs in religion, for example, a student must have completed an accredited degree as a basis for further work, have a knowledge of the biblical languages and/or research languages, and have completed a significant writing assignment. (6) Dissertations, theses or other scholarly works completed in programs are not required to be defended before recognized experts in the field of study. (7) The prospective student or his church may not understand accreditation, (8) Work or location could prevent travel to an accredited school, but now many good schools

1 offer distance education programs (see below), (9) the prospec-
2 tive student may believe that accreditation is not required for
3 his present or future ministry.

4 Let's talk #3 expense. One of the unaccredited schools dis-
5 cussed below charges only \$75 for a course. Were a degree
6 to require the completion of ten courses, the student would
7 pay only \$750 tuition for his degree. On the other hand, if the
8 student took ten courses in the TRACS accredited Luther Rice
9 seminary at about \$300 per credit, the student would shell out
10 \$9000 or so. How can we possibly justify laying out that huge
11 difference in paying for an education? Yet, I suppose that if
12 one were buying a car or truck to drive across the country,
13 then he would opt for the \$9, 000 vehicle worrying that the
14 \$750 auto might not make the journey. Ha! This old man (me-
15 soon to be 81) recently paid about \$25,000 for really neat, used
16 Dodge Challenger SRT 6.1 Hemi. Silly old Bill! But, why would
17 one who wants to preach and teach pay more for a car or for
18 a houseful of furniture, appliances, air conditioning and stuff
19 than for an education in God's Word and in Christian beliefs?
20 What are we putting first? What should be our priorities? But
21 why should a school charge a thousand dollars to take one
22 graduate course? I'm sure there are many expenses that I don't
23 understand.

24 But consider just the professor's wages as a contributor
25 to seminary cost. When I attended Western Seminary, that
26 was in 1990-1994, my salary as a public- school teacher was
27 more than that which a full professor of Bible at Western was
28 making. Not all of God's precious servants get rich off "serv-
29 ing" God's people like...well, you can name some, I'm sure.
30 Still a good seminary must hire a sufficient number of highly

qualified teachers to handle the curriculum it offers in preach- 1
ing, counseling, Bible, languages, theology as so forth. Devoted 2
and educationally competent teachers in accredited schools 3
have paid a great deal for their own education, and they work 4
diligently to educate their students. So, how can unaccredited 5
schools offer tuition at a much cheaper cost? By not hiring 6
qualified teachers! By allowing or requiring teachers to lower 7
learning bench marks thus making the teacher's job less com- 8
plicated and difficult! By charging little while giving students 9
little! Or does anyone really think that lesser quality schools 10
generally offer the equivalent learning opportunities at a frac- 11
tion of the cost of accredited schools? If you think that, then 12
read on. 13

DECEPTIVE TACTICS OF MANY UNACCREDITED THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS

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What will be evident in the later look at unaccredited seminaries is their frequent obscuration of genuine accreditation with unsubstantiated assertions. One deceptive tactic is the implication that “state approval” involves a close supervision of that school’s academics. It does not. A second deceptive tactic to dress a seminary with respectability is by having an affiliate membership in the Association for Higher Biblical Education which is a recognized national accreditor. But to acquire affiliate membership in ABHE only involves concurring with the Association’s statement of faith, having state exemption, and being recommended by a member institution; it is not accreditation.

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A third deceptive tactic used by unaccredited schools is to claim accreditation by an unaccredited accreditor, that is, one not recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or CHEA. Here is a short list of some of these organizations which “accredit” religious schools:

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*Accrediting Commission International

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BILL GROVER

1 *American Accrediting Associations of Theological
2 Institutions

3 * American Federation of Colleges and Seminaries

4 * Association of Accrediting Bible Schools

5 *Association of Christian Colleges and Theological Schools

6 *Association of Reformed Theological Seminaries*Christian
7 Accrediting Association

8 * Interfaith Education Ministries

9 *International Association for Distance Learning

10 *Southern Association of Bible Colleges and Seminaries

11 *Kingdom Fellowship of Christian Schools and Colleges

12 * National Accrediting Agency of Private Theological
13 Institutions

14 *Transworld Accrediting Commission International

15 * World Wide Accreditation Commission of Christian
16 Educational Institutions.

17 These are unaccredited accreditors. They are next to worth-
18 less. Don't be fooled. Look at these examples of seminaries de-
19 ceiving students with deceptive claims of being accredited:

20 Andersonville Theological Seminary

21 This school claims to be “an outstanding distance learning
22 school.” To prove that assertion is its accreditation or recogni-
23 tion not by only one or even by two, but by three agencies.

24 Wowie!!! just imagine!!! Andersonville is accredited by
25 three accreditors :(1) The United States Distance Learning
26 Association,(2)The Association of Christian Distance Learning,
27 and (3) The Association of Christian Schools International.
28 What a scam. Time to fleece the sheep.

Freedom Bible College

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This school explains that since it adheres to the separation
of church and state, it has not applied for accreditation from an
agency of the United States. That, of course, is like me saying
that since I believe that Christians should not show off, I will
not seek a position as quarter back for the Los Angeles Rams.
Baloney! It's fabrication and deceit. Instead, Freedom adver-
tises its accreditation by the National Accrediting Agency
of Private Theological Institutions. Of course, Freedom also
congratulates itself on being a "high quality source of biblical
education." Compared to what, one wonders. Elisha had the
mantle of Elijah, but covering itself with the capes of phony
accreditors does not enhance a school's quality.

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Covington Theological Seminary

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Here it is again: "We will not seek government accredita-
tion because we believe in the separation of church and state."
What a rouse. What a scam. This school has as much chance
of being regionally accredited as I have of picking apples off
a corn stalk. Yet Covington congratulates itself on having
"high academic standards that guarantee the proper certifica-
tion." To evidence this, Covington is accredited by the unac-
credited Accrediting Commission International. What a joke.
Now understand, I am not implying that no learning occurs at
Covington or other such schools; I am saying that the learning
for the most part likely is very substandard. I tell you more
about why below.

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1 Pneuma Theological Seminary

2 This school enamors itself with phrases as “professional
3 competence,” “highest academic standards” and “academic ex-
4 cellence.” This despite having survey and “word study” cours-
5 es more suitable to undergraduate programs in its Doctor of
6 Theology required program. Even more telling of its hyper-
7 bole is the fact that where its professors obtained their doctor-
8 ates is not listed. Why? Because their doctorates are fake. But
9 to the ill- informed, and possibly vain among us, here is an op-
10 portunity to earn a doctoral degree approved by the incredible
11 or rather unbelievable Accrediting Commission International.

12 Newburgh Theological Seminary

13 This seminary on its website reminds us that churches want
14 pastors with real, really, really, really real degrees and that a
15 degree from Newburgh is just that. After all, Newburgh has its
16 accreditation with the exceptional Accrediting Commission
17 International. You know, that agency which in 2009 was
18 described as being an accrediting mill by the American
19 Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers.
20 And that very accrediting agency allows Newburgh to offer
21 a Ph.D. in Bible by completing six simple courses and writing
22 a sixty- page dissertation. Is it any wonder that I ask, “Is there
23 a real doctor in the church?” I alerted you that evidence was
24 coming of the substandard doctoral degrees in some unaccred-
25 ited schools- there is some of it and there is much more ahead.

26 Not one of these agencies above provides genuine accredi-
27 tation. Don’t be fooled. If the school’s accreditation is not re-
28 gional or national, that school is not accredited.

A fourth deceptive tactic is to list an “impressive” array of faculty, each member with one or more doctorates behind their names. However, more often than not it is not revealed where these faculty members received their training; that is, are their degrees from accredited schools? As will be further shown below, doctoral degrees in Bible or Theology are not all rigorous. A fifth deceit is to assert as two of those above, that the reason the school does not seek accreditation by recognized accreditors is that to do so would disrupt the school’s Christian curriculum. This is quite incorrect and amounts to deceit and an attempt to hide the school’s lack luster qualities.

A sixth deceptive tactic is to cover up the inadequacies of a school’s curriculum and faculty by references to the Bible, God, and to the supposed empowerment of potential students if they enroll. For example, consider Christian Leadership University. This school’s website entices you by suggesting that you will hear God’s voice, become illuminated by the Holy Spirit, get the anointing of Jesus, and learn Bible centered material. The “university” has its accreditation from, you guessed it, the outstanding Christian Accreditation International. It also is “certified” by “The Apostolic Council for Educational Accountability.” Gee that sounds very impressive, right?

Such apostolic approval assures the rigor of the university’s degrees, right? So, does the CLU doctoral curriculum really foster illumination and the know how to hear God’s voice?

Consider the requirements to complete classes in order to earn a doctorate. One may choose any courses from the CLU catalogue. Here’s a good one: The Gospel of John. To complete this course for doctoral work requires: (1) answering the questions in the Life Change book on John, (2) memorizing the

1 signs and I AM's, in John, (3) memorizing several Bible verses,
2 and (4) writing , hold on to your hats, a four to six- page paper.
3 That is all. Bill, you're kidding right? No! I am not!

4 What? You're not hearing God's voice speaking through
5 these rigorous assignments? You're not being illuminated and
6 anointed by them? Have you not really learned John at a doc-
7 toral level? Well, maybe at a kid's Sunday school level. But the
8 school is accredited, right? See how much phony accreditation
9 is worth? See how much the extravagant claims are worth?
10 See how much deception there is? **See why I write?** The only
11 true religion is suffering from a tsunami of false degree mak-
12 ers, and we are being submerged in the waves of educational
13 deceit and vanity. Many who are quite unwilling to expose
14 themselves to a rigorous education in Bible and theology nev-
15 ertheless greatly desire being called "Dr." These take a deceit-
16 ful route to satisfy that craving by avoiding the hard work.
17 And, church members uneducated in what learning the Bible
18 and theology at a doctoral level actually entails, fawn over
19 their fake "doctors." The deception that we would despise in
20 other professions has become acceptable to many in the most
21 important profession of all: teaching God's Word fully and
22 accurately.

THE UNITED KINGDOM MODEL FOR GETTING ADVANCED DEGREES

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Some readers may not know that there is quite a difference 5
between the American manner of earning a graduate degree 6
(course work plus thesis or dissertation) versus the United 7
Kingdom program of completing an advanced degree by re- 8
search only, that is, by doing just a thesis or dissertation to get 9
a degree. I completed one doctorate using this model. In 2001 10
I was in my thirty-second year of teaching public school. I 11
planned, and did, teach public school for three more years. As 12
I loved Christian Theology and Bible, I had already completed 13
over the years the work for three master's degrees, part time, 14
in those subjects from accredited schools in the U.S.A. doing 15
both coursework and, for one, a thesis as well. I then had the 16
urge to do a doctorate also. But I needed to provide for my fam- 17
ily and could not relocate. 18

Yet, I came across the accredited doctoral program of the 19
University of Zululand (Unizul) in South Africa which at that 20
time accepted international students. The degree was a Doctor 21
of Theology in Systematic Theology. I applied, and because I 22

1 had an accredited masters' degrees in the area of the Th.D., I
2 was accepted. I began by submitting a research proposal then,
3 that being approved, I was assigned a "promoter" to supervise
4 my research. I worked for three years part time and a year and
5 a half in addition full time. I completed the research and fin-
6 ished my dissertation in 2005. Then a very qualified commit-
7 tee from three different schools read and approved my work.
8 I don't believe Unizul offers this program now. But other insti-
9 tutions in South Africa do.

10 One of these is the South African Theological seminary
11 where, after earning my doctorate and retiring from public
12 school teaching, I taught (online) from 2006 through 2018. At
13 this school an international student can do coursework, write
14 theses, and complete graduate degrees up to and including the
15 Ph.D. in Bible and Theology at, comparatively, low cost. One
16 need not relocate; one can keep his occupation. This school is
17 fully accredited in South Africa and is GAAP. So, why do a sub-
18 standard U.S. decree in an unaccredited school America?

19 Similar opportunities can be found in the United Kingdom
20 as well. Consider Nottingham where one can do an M.A. in
21 Systematic and Philosophical Theology by distance or the
22 Ph.D. in Theology and Religious Studies by independent re-
23 search leading to a dissertation. These programs are offered
24 to international students. Or look at Edinburgh where one
25 can do a master of Theology by writing a 40,000word thesis.
26 (note: This is not the equivalent of the American Th.M.!). So,
27 why would one do such inadequate training offered in most
28 unaccredited seminaries in the U.S.A.

29 I will make the comment that in my opinion doing a mas-
ter's degree in theology by research only (which means doing

it in a narrow topic) as a preparation to enter doctoral studies by research (again in a narrow topic) may not be the best way to go because focusing on a such small areas of theology may not educate one in the broader domains of the Christian religion.

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SEMINARY THEOLOGICAL DEGREES 2 3

Master of Arts degree (M.A.) 4

The M.A. generally requires the equivalent of 30 or more semester hours. While its nomenclature suggests that a mastery of a subject has been attained, such is not the case. The degree can take two years or only one of full-time study. It may be non-thesis or include a thesis. Such a thesis should make a distinct addition to knowledge. Concentrations are varied including such as Christian counseling, systematic theology, and biblical exegesis. A biblical language may or may not be required depending on the subject in which the degree is taken. 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13

The Master of Divinity degree (M. Div) 14

This higher masters (than the M.A.) requires from 72 to 90 or more semester hours and takes three years to complete after (usually) doing an undergraduate degree. The M. Div. is perhaps the most common seminary masters preparing one for pastoring. Coursework often includes the biblical languages of 15 16 17 18 19

1 Hebrew and Greek, systematic theology, and work in praxis as
2 pastoral counseling and homiletics. Here is the curriculum for
3 the M. Div. program at Multnomah University:

4 English Bible: seven courses

5 Biblical Languages: Greek, four courses. Hebrew as an
6 elective.

7 Theology: six courses covering systematic Theology,
8 Church History, and Comparative Religions.

9 Practical Theology: six courses covering preaching, coun-
10 seling, and mentored ministry.

11 Spiritual Formation and Leadership: Three courses

12 Electives: 12 units

13 I invite the reader to compare the apparent rigor required to
14 earn the M. Div. degree in accredited schools, as Multnomah,
15 with the curriculum of some unaccredited schools.

16 Master of Theology (Th.M.)

17 This very advanced master's degree requiring a year or two
18 of full- time study beyond the M. Div. and provides a more in-
19 -depth acquisition of knowledge in a narrow area in Bible or
20 Theology. An examination and thesis are generally required
21 in addition to coursework. The Th.M., in requiring a four- year
22 B.A., a three- year M.Div. and a minimum of another year or
23 two for the Th.M. (8-9 years) shows, in the time required for
24 completion, that the Th.M. may equal the B.A., M.A., Ph.D.
25 sequence.

26

Doctor of Ministry (D. Min.)

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While some seminaries offer doctorates in Education (Ed.D.) or the Ph.D., (the Th.D., Doctor of Theology which is a basic equivalent to the Ph. D. is rarely awarded in the United States anymore) the most common doctorate currently offered in many schools is the Doctor of Ministry (D. Min). The D. Min can have concentrations in a wide variety of subjects- just as examples:

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* Congregational and Family Care Engagement (Bethel Seminary)

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*Biblical and Theological Engagement (Bethel Seminary)

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* Chaplaincy (Lancaster Bible College)

12

* Evangelism and Church Planting (Liberty University)

13

*Urban Ministry (Liberty University)

14

*Christian Counseling (Apex School of Theology)

15

*Theological Exegesis (Knox Seminary)

16

* Biblical Preaching (Luther Seminary)

17

*Theology and Apologetics (Corban University)

18

Theology and the Arts (United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities)

19

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*Youth Ministry (Multnomah University)

21

*Asian-American Ministry and Theology (Columbia Theological Seminary)

22

23

*African American Leadership (Talbot Theological Seminary)

24

25

*Missions (Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary)

26

*Spiritual Formation (Wesley Seminary)

27

An individual school may offer several concentrations.

28

1 My experience with the D. Min. is in the Corban University
2 program. The normal requirement is four years of study be-
3 yond the M. Div. plus ministry experience. Three two- week,
4 summer in class meetings are required and the rest is done by
5 distance education.

6 The D. Min is to be differentiated from the Ph.D. in outcome
7 and purpose. It is intended to be an advanced, practical degree
8 for some sort of ministry whereas the Ph.D. is an academic
9 qualification to do research or to teach in a particular subject
10 matter. The Doctor of Ministry degree is not viewed with ap-
11 proval by some. The question of whether it is a “fluff” degree
12 was raised on the internet and 158 replies either argued that it
13 is or is not. While not all schools have the same requirements
14 for earning either degree, an interesting comparison between
15 what is required for the Ph.D. vs. the D. Min. may be observed
16 in the requisites of the Westminster Theological Seminary.¹²

| Ph.D. D. Min. | D. Min. |
|--|--|
| 1. Prerequisite = The 74 unit M.A. with Hebrew and Greek | 1. Prerequisite = 111 unit M.Div with Hebrew and Greek |
| 2. 36 semester hours plus French and German | 2. 30 semester hours |
| 3. Dissertation | 3. Applied research project |

17
18 Other schools offer the M. Div. with fewer semester hours
19 ranging generally from 76 to 90 not 111 as Westminster. Either
20 the three- year M. Div. or its equivalency is required to enter
21 the D. Min. programs. Then, finishing the D. Min. is another
22 three or four years. So, the time to finish the D. Min. resembles

that of the Ph. D., even possibly a year longer. Further, whereas 1
the completing the Ph.D. may require no teaching experience, 2
often to enter the D. Min requires three years of some sort 3
of ministry experience. A Doctor of Ministry program may 4
consist of several short annual residencies and the comple- 5
tion of thousands of pages of reading and written assignments 6
throughout much of the year. Additionally, a thesis-project of 7
perhaps 200 or so pages must be completed and presented be- 8
fore a group. Again, the quality of instruction in these degrees 9
is related to the quality of the education of the professors. 10

In my opinion one of the most important indicators of the 11
efficiency of instruction in a seminary is the educational back- 12
ground of the faculty. So, I think that one way to estimate the 13
likely rigor of a seminary curriculum is to note what degrees 14
the faculty possesses. If the faculty members, themselves, did 15
not exert great effort to earn a doctorate, why would we sup- 16
pose they would they understand what rigor should be need- 17
ed to do a real doctorate? If you joined a gym intent on build- 18
ing a great physique then found out that the gym instructor 19
looked like Tiny Tim, wouldn't you cancel your membership? 20

So, for example, look with me at the academic qualifica- 21
tions of the faculty of Jacksonville Theological Seminary. This 22
school offers you the opportunity to acquire a doctorate in six- 23
teen different subjects (just imagine!! sixteen!!) So, Jacksonville 24
must have a whoppingly great faculty-right? Well, it's cer- 25
tainly whoppingly big. Seventy-two "facilitators" are listed. 26
They are all listed as "Dr." Wowie! Seventy-two doctors. And 27
can you guess where about 99% of these did their doctoral de- 28
grees? You guessed it, from Jacksonville. So, how many profs 29
at Jacksonville who teach the sixteen different Ph.D. areas 30

BILL GROVER

- 1 actually have accredited doctorates? None, that's how many.
- 2 Did you see the BIG RED FLAG zipped up? Without a compe-
- 3 tent faculty there is not competent instruction. And, I have
- 4 tried to illustrate what competence in Bible education at grad-
- 5 uate levels includes.

SOME ACCREDITED SEMINARIES OFFERING DEGREES BY DISTANCE

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There are quite a number of accredited schools offering advanced degrees by distance. The following illustrate what is available. This writer hopes that these examples reveal that to acquire quality distance education degrees in ministry, Bible, or Theology does not require enrolling in unaccredited schools.

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A prospective student seeking a theological degree by distance education will need to realize that there could be disadvantages in completing his studies outside of a seminary's classroom. Interaction with class members and with the professor will likely be limited. And the school's library may not be available. Furthermore, the distance learning student must be very motivated and mature. He is more on his own.

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Dallas Theological Seminary

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This exceptionally well-recognized school offers a thirty-six unit master of Biblical and Theological studies online.

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BILL GROVER

1 It requires two years of study. The course work is in Bible,
2 Theology, and Ministry.

3 Western Seminary

4 In my experience, this is a very good school. By distance,
5 Western offers an 82 credit Master of Divinity degree with
6 emphases in Bible and Theology, Chaplaincy, Pastoral work,
7 or Exegetics. It offers as well as an M.A. in Global Leadership.

8 Fuller Theological Seminary

9 This school also offers a number of degrees by distance
10 education. These include one master's degree in Theology
11 and another in Ministry. Students can also earn the Master of
12 Divinity by distance.

13 Southern California Seminary

14 This TRACS accredited school with its beautiful campus
15 located on a hill in El Cajon California (just outside of San
16 Diego) was where I first earned a degree. But then it was called
17 "Linda Vista Bible College and Seminary." The seminary offers
18 masters' degrees in Biblical Studies, Christian Counseling, and
19 Philosophy and Apologetics, plus the Master of Divinity en-
20 tirely by distance.

21 Liberty University

22 Liberty University which is regionally accredited of-
23 fers both masters' and doctoral degrees entirely by distance
24 online. For example, the M.A. in Religion- Biblical studies is

completed in 8 -week courses which begin 8 times yearly. The 1
cost is a under \$400 per credit hour. Liberty is unusual in that 2
it also offers the Ph. D. online which requires 60 hours and can 3
be possibly completed in three years. The tuition is around 4
\$650 per credit hour. 5

Luther Rice Seminary 6

Luther Rice which is TRACS and ABHE accredited offers 7
both the 36-hour M.A. (in for example Apologetics) and the 90 8
-hour M. Div. entirely online. Tuition is \$285 per credit hour. 9
Online courses use Blackboard. 10

Corban University 11

Corban, which is regionally accredited, offers the three 12
-year Master of Divinity entirely online at \$395 per credit. 13
This university also has a very good Doctor of Ministry degree 14
done in four years which requires only three two summer 15
weeks of in classwork and the completing of reading and writ- 16
ten assignments done at home. I enjoyed doing the Theology 17
and Apologetics track in this doctorate from Corban. And, hey 18
it's in Salem, Oregon with river and lake fishing opportunities 19
galore and sunny beaches and evergreen covered mountains 20
just 45 miles away. And, in the summertime it doesn't rain 21
that much. No, this is not a paid announcement. 22

Denver Seminary 23

Denver Seminary is regionally accredited and offers both 24
a 39- hour M.A. in Bible and Theology and a 78- hour M. Div. 25

1 entirely by distance. As is typical, to be admitted to M.A. or M.
2 Div. programs requires having graduated with a B.A. from a re-
3 gionally accredited school. The school offers a D. Min. degree
4 as well, but not wholly by distance education. Prerequisites to
5 enter the D. Min. include having an accredited masters, pass-
6 ing an oral exam on Bible, Theology, and ministry, and com-
7 pleting at least three successful years of ministry.

8 **Talbot Seminary**

9 Talbot which is also regionally accredited offers a vari-
10 ety of online M.A. degrees including: Bible Exposition, New
11 Testament, Old Testament, Theology (with or without Greek),
12 Classical Theology, Apologetics, and Science and Religion. The
13 tuition is \$650 per credit.

14 **Southern Evangelical Seminary**

15 SES is TRACS accredited. According to the website, all de-
16 gree programs offered by SES can be completed online. This
17 is done by using live streaming or by watching pre- recorded
18 lessons. SES is one of the few accredited institutions offering a
19 Ph.D. (in the Philosophy of Religion) by distance. Also available
20 are several masters' degrees including the four- year Th.M.
21 which is intended to equip one for doing research. Tuition is
22 \$238 per credit hour.

23 I should pause to note that earning a degree by distance ed-
24 ucation would seem to put some additional requisites on the
25 school, the professor, and on the student. Is the online course
26 the equivalent of the course taught in a classroom setting?
27 Can the distance education coursework in one accredited

school be accepted in transfer to another accredited schools? 1
Will the distance education degree be seen as equal in merit 2
to the non-distance degree? Is the teacher of the online course 3
as qualified in the subject as the teacher of that subject in the 4
classroom? Is the syllabus for the course complete and clear? Is 5
it stipulated exactly how and when interaction with the pro- 6
fessor can be effectively experienced? Does the student have 7
the maturity and self-direction to complete coursework more 8
independently? 9

But, to continue: 10

Shasta Bible College and Graduate School 11

Shasta has national accreditation through TRACS. It offers 12
graduate degrees by distance including the M. Div. in Military 13
Chaplaincy and the M.S. in Education. The faculty includes 14
some with accredited doctorates. Tuition is \$375 per graduate 15
unit. 16

Evangelica University 17

This TRACS accredited school is “Reformed Korean.” The 18
Korean language is the main language used in communica- 19
tion. The faculty members have very respectable accredited 20
doctorates. A master’s degree is offered at \$180 per unit and a 21
D. Min. at \$350 per unit. 22

Multnomah University 23

This regionally accredited school offers the standard M. 24
Div degree plus two unusual masters’ degrees by distance 25

BILL GROVER

1 education. One of the latter is a 39 unit master's in teaching
2 English to speakers of other languages. The other is a 38 unit
3 masters in global development and justice. Tuition is \$590 per
4 credit for graduate coursework.

5 Nations University

6 Nations has national accreditation through DEAC. It offers
7 the master's in Theology and the Master of Divinity programs
8 entirely by distance education. This school is non-denomina-
9 tional and encourages applicants from other countries. The
10 faculty members have solid academic qualifications, and the
11 tuition is quite low. Rather than a cost per semester or quar-
12 ter unit, the school charges \$450 per quarter year regardless
13 of the number of courses taken. The basic requirements for a
14 degree seem to be respectable.

SOME UNACCREDITED SEMINARIES OFFERING DEGREES BY DISTANCE

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The present writer should not be accused of elitism or an unchristian attitude. It is a matter of questionable honesty to award graduate degrees with very substandard requirements and teaching. Learning about God and how to serve Him and His people should demand one's best effort and achievement. In this writer's opinion, there is a great deal of fraud perpetrated by some of the institutions below. Still, when it appears that an unaccredited school has some good qualities, the writer had tried to note them.

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Louisiana Baptist University and Seminary (lbu.edu)

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This is an interesting online institution and appears more impressive than a number of unaccredited schools. It is an affiliate member, not an accredited member, of ABHE. It also is a member of the Association of Christian Schools International. But what to some is more significant is that it is an approved institution of the Baptist Fellowship International denomination.

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1 It is unusual for an unaccredited seminary to have ties with a
2 denomination. That a Baptist denomination would consider
3 LBU&S worthy to train its clergy suggests that the institution
4 has gained some recognition and quite probably has some sub-
5 stance in its offerings.

6 The combined University-Seminary offers numerous and
7 varied undergraduate, graduate, and Ph.D. courses of study
8 with modest tuition ranging from \$110 to \$130 per unit. It
9 will be noted that this is far less expensive than regionally
10 accredited programs. Programs leading to advanced degrees
11 in Pastoral Ministry, Education, Communication, Music,
12 Counseling, Marketing and Management, Theology, Bible,
13 Prophecy (that is, eschatological studies not how to be a
14 prophet) and other areas are offered. The number of units re-
15 quired in these programs seem acceptable.

16 Further, in general, the courses named as being offered in
17 some of the other programs appear to be advanced as well.
18 For example, the MA and PhD in Christian Counseling in-
19 clude course work in Psychotherapy, Cognitive assessment,
20 Adolescent Psychology, Treating Homosexuality, Ministering
21 to the Terminally ill, Treating Alcoholism and other seemingly
22 advanced and complex studies. Coursework leading to doctor-
23 ates in Education and Bible are described in manners possibly
24 equally imposing to those uninitiated in these disciplines. So,
25 what qualifications do LBU&S professors possess to lead their
26 students through a mastery of such apparently rigorous train-
27 ing in these subjects?

28 That is where one might offer criticism. Note that none
29 of the deans of various schools possess genuinely accredited
30 doctoral degrees. Neither the dean of the School of Biblical

Studies, nor the Dean of the School of Christian Education, 1
nor the Dean of the School of Christian Counseling has an ac- 2
credited doctorate in the subject which he or she heads. These 3
three deans, in fact, lack any accredited doctorates. 4

And the same is true of practically all of the teachers of 5
subjects listed as faculty members. The school offers a PhD 6
in School Administration, but no faculty member has an ac- 7
credited doctorate in that subject. The school offers a Ph.D. in 8
Prophecy, but no professor has a regionally accredited Ph.D. 9
or Th.D. in Bible or Theology. The school offers a Ph. D. in 10
Counseling, but no professor has an accredited Ph.D. or even 11
a Psy. D. in Counseling. This raises the issue of whether one 12
teaching graduate course work with an unaccredited doctor- 13
ate is likely to teach academic subjects as well as one having 14
an accredited doctorate. 15

Note that the writer is not including some praxis, as sub- 16
jects like preaching, in this discussion. One would think that 17
very experienced, successful pastors, whether they have ac- 18
credited doctorates or not, should be able to teach some areas 19
of ministry without accredited doctorates in ministry. It is 20
the teaching of graduate level systematic theology, languages, 21
psychology, Bible and some other academic subjects which is 22
the focus of the next section. 23

Excursus on the preparation to teach graduate Bible and 24 Theology 25

Given the observation on the academic qualifications of 26
the LBU&S faculty, this seems an opportune time to consider 27
possible differences between acquiring accredited academic 28

1 doctorates versus getting unaccredited academic doctorates
2 in connection with becoming prepared to instruct in gradu-
3 ate level studies in seminary. First, certainly one could be
4 wrong to suppose that a particular graduate course taught by
5 one without an accredited doctorate is without exception of
6 necessity inferior in its instruction to one led by one with an
7 accredited doctorate. Issues as honestly , effectively and criti-
8 cally evaluating competitive dogma in classwork, the oppor-
9 tunity and quality of the interaction of student with profes-
10 sor, the course requirements, the processes of evaluating the
11 meeting of instructional goals and objectives, the quality and
12 appropriateness of the instructional materials themselves, the
13 experience of the teacher , and perhaps too, his spirituality
14 and conservatism could be important as well in programs in
15 Bible and Theology.

16 In regard to the last sentence, a doctoral level student in
17 Theology should have been well-established in his or her doc-
18 trinal positions during pre- doctoral studies and therefore not
19 be so much susceptible to educational influences in doctoral
20 work which conflict with one's prior convictions. But gradu-
21 ate study in a theological environment not quite precisely
22 one's own can enable one to grasp better the complexities of
23 the differences between theological systems. It can be per-
24 ceived as a possible disadvantage of some unaccredited online
25 seminaries when the faculty is ingrown by having advanced
26 degrees from their own schools. Perhaps a faculty having
27 many graduate degrees from its own school should be consid-
28 ered less desirable particularly if the school lacks recognized
29 accreditation.

It would seem more likely, other conditions being equal, 1
that one who has a recognized, accredited doctorate in his 2
general subject matter of instruction would be more apt to 3
potentially have greater educational experiences suitable for 4
bringing illumination on the material being studied. This con- 5
clusion seems warranted given the probable more intense su- 6
pervision recognized accrediting associations place on the ac- 7
ademics of the institutions they accredit. Consequently, were 8
two individuals to complete masters and doctoral degrees, one 9
in an unaccredited school and the other in an accredited one, 10
given equal ability and effort on the student's part, it would 11
seem probable that the individual graduating from the accred- 12
ited school would learn the subject matter better and receive 13
more vigorous supervision. And by experiencing that, one 14
should become more apt to teach the subject well. 15

A conclusion on whether unaccredited coursework itself 16
is equivalent to that in accredited programs could be tested, 17
admittedly only by a good deal of informed effort, by honest- 18
ly evaluating the particulars, for example, of a doctoral level 19
course in Bible or Systematic Theology. Are the general course 20
requirements of sufficient rigor? Do the assignments encour- 21
age use of the biblical languages? Are the textbooks and oth- 22
er learning materials sufficiently advanced? Are the goals, 23
objectives, and course requirements equal to those of its ac- 24
credited counterpart? Is the attainment of learning objectives 25
adequately measured? Are students required to exhibit good 26
understandings of the various positions on major issues, and 27
are they required to effectively, critically interact with some 28
of those various positions? Are advanced types of comprehen- 29
sion required or, instead, is mere memory of material or brief 30

1 summarization of it sufficient to succeed in the course? And,
2 of course, is the instructor him or herself capable of assess-
3 ing the student's achievement in such areas? Unfortunately,
4 generally school catalogues do not answer these questions.
5 Perhaps a prospective student should make inquiries to school
6 representatives or graduates on such matters. Why invest
7 one's time and money on extensive formal education with-
8 out investigating the quality of the institution providing that
9 education?

10 A qualification of the teacher alluded to above opens a new
11 topic which affects the quality of seminary education. Are
12 the course designer and instructor of a course familiar with
13 basic principles and strategies of teaching? Observe that to
14 earn credentials to teach history to students in public high
15 schools requires course work not only in the subject of his-
16 tory but coursework in the methodology of teaching also. A
17 seminary professor may know his subject very well, but that
18 does not necessarily mean that he or she can effectively teach
19 that subject matter well. Unfortunately, it is not generally the
20 case that programs leading to achieving qualifications to teach
21 graduate level Bible or Theology include coursework in how
22 to teach. It is assumed, possibly to the detriment of future stu-
23 dents, that just knowing a subject qualifies one to teach that
24 subject. Ironically, ministerial students receive coursework in
25 in how to prepare and deliver sermons, but prospective pro-
26 fessors of Bible or Theology may not receive formal guidance
27 in delivering learning.

28 To continue...

29

Trinity Bible College and Seminary in Indiana

1

The present writer has had some experience with Trinity-
which is not to be confused with Trinity Evangelical Divinity
School in the late 1990s. He was teaching public school full time
and had completed work for an accredited MA and a Th.M. in
Christian Theology. His employment made doing a doctorate
which required residency difficult. At that time Trinity was
seeking regional accreditation and was assuring prospec-
tive students of a successful outcome. Furthermore, Trinity
at this time was claiming to be accredited by the University
of Liverpool. So, the writer enrolled in several doctoral level
courses in Theology.

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The courses were “taught” by listening to cassette tapes of
well-known scholars and writing responses on them. It soon
became this writer’s perception that the Trinity doctoral level
Theology courses were not equal to his experience in master’s
level graduate work in accredited schools. It was not the well-
known scholars on the tapes who interacted with the student,
it was “graders” who marked and commented on submitted
work. The writer unenrolled in Trinity and, needless to say,
Trinity did not achieve regional accreditation.

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Still, this school is successful in some areas. It has about
1400 distance education students. It also has some faculty
with accredited doctorates. It awards several types of doctor-
al degrees. It has a good catalog available online. It is able to
charge a somewhat higher tuition (\$176-\$243 per unit) than
some other unaccredited seminaries, and the Trinity website
lists a large number of notable graduates.

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1 Yet, it should be observed that some of the supposed evi-
2 dences of quality which could make a favorable impression on
3 prospective students should be carefully evaluated. The school
4 still uses audio tapes to teach graduate courses. Who marks
5 student responses to these? Who interacts with students?
6 And note, a large percentage of the Trinity professors only
7 have doctorates from Trinity. And that long listing of notable
8 graduates Trinity touts does not answer the question of just
9 how the Trinity degree influenced their employment or rec-
10 ognition. Was it Soderquist's Trinity degree or his Harvard JD
11 which enabled him to teach Law at Vanderbilt University?
12 Was it Madtes' Trinity degree or his Ph.D. in Biochemistry
13 from Texas A&M which got him the job teaching Biology at
14 Mt Vernon Nazarene University?

15 At the time this present writer was in the Trinity degree
16 program, a Trinity prof with a Th. M. From Dallas Theological
17 Seminary and a doctorate from Trinity was promising Trinity's
18 ability to become accredited. When it did not, the Prof -who
19 is fairly well-known now as an author and has a position on
20 a South African seminary -earned a GAAP doctorate from a
21 South African school now no longer lists his Trinity degree.
22 That should suggest the low esteem given Trinity in academia.
23 Clearly, if someone is intending to use the Trinity degree to
24 seriously advance his employment opportunity or academic
25 recognition, that plan is ill-advised.

26 Pneuma Theological Seminary

27 This school is located in Oakland California. It offers mas-
28 ters and doctoral degrees by distance education. The M.A. in

Biblical Studies is 76 hours with a price tag of only \$35 per hour. 1
The curriculum for this degree has some surprising subjects. 2
One is “Depth Psychology.” Why take “Depth Psychology” in 3
a degree in Biblical Studies? Another is “Exegesis of Leviticus.” 4
But biblical exegesis includes arriving at the meaning of 5
the original language. But having a working knowledge of 6
Hebrew is not a prerequisite for this course nor is Hebrew 7
listed as an elective or required course in any of the curricula 8
for this school. And why choose Leviticus as the only Book of 9
the Bible to “exegete”? 10

The school also offers doctorates but not just “learned ones.” 11
Honorary ones too are offered based on experience. For exam- 12
ple, if one has completed twenty years in the ministry, one can 13
become a “Doctor of Divinity.” If one is a retired schoolteacher, 14
one can get a “Doctor of Letters.” If one has started a food bank, 15
one can get a “Doctor of Humanities.” Imagine if I, as former 16
school teacher, collected lots of cans of beans for the needy, I 17
could be called “Dr., Dr.”! 18

But the school also offers a “learned” Doctor of Theology 19
degree. It is a two-year program unlike any credible Th.D. 20
programs which I have encountered. A genuine doctorate is 21
extensive research and very hard work in one narrow area. 22
But the Pneuma Th.D. requires two courses in Principles in 23
Leadership,” a course in Worship in Music” and another in 24
“Urban Educational Ministry.” Then two courses, suitable for 25
an under graduate degree, are required: “Greek Word Studies” 26
and “Survey of the Pentateuch.” But why would one doing a 27
doctoral degree be doing a survey course? 28

And who supervises these courses? The faculty is listed in a 29
manner I’m almost sure unique. For example, “Head Marshall” 30

1 "Head Mother" "School Photographer" "Dean of Literature"
2 and, hold on to your hats, "Head Chef." NOTE: Each one of
3 these, including the chef, are called "Dr.!" The janitor is not
4 mentioned as being a Dr. Just an oversight probably. Yet, de-
5 spite these incredible aberrations from normality, the school
6 is accredited by Accrediting Commission International which
7 should suggest to the reader the lack luster quality of ACI. If
8 ACI accredits your auto mechanic, give up driving.

9 Columbia Evangelical in Washington State

10 CES which takes its name from the Columbia River in
11 Washington State seems to possess several desirable quali-
12 ties. To begin, CES on its website makes clear the difference
13 between unapproved accreditation and recognized accredita-
14 tion, and it is up front about its lack of either. It proceeds to ex-
15 plain the value of getting an accredited degree in preference
16 to an unaccredited one. Despite that lack of accreditation, in
17 this writer's opinion, the school has in place factors which
18 could encourage a good distance learning experience.

19 This is suggested by the steps required to complete a de-
20 gree program. The student selects several mentors from a
21 very qualified list with whom he or she would like to work.
22 CES makes arrangements for one, only, of those the student
23 selected to supervise that student's entire program of study. A
24 learning contract is developed between the student, the men-
25 tor, and a CES representative. The student proposes a syllabus
26 and learning materials for each individual course of study
27 which are approved by the mentor and CES. The course work
28 for each class is completed and marked by the one, chosen

mentor. Then the thesis or dissertation is done with guidance 1
from that same mentor. These steps would appear to involve 2
much interaction between the teacher and the student. 3

However, it may be noted that having a single professor 4
monitoring one's entire degree program may result in a lim- 5
ited educational experience. Yet, such is common in research 6
only degrees popular in places as the United Kingdom and 7
South Africa. Still, while in those places the research only 8
thesis or dissertation may in the main be supervised by one 9
professor, it must be evaluated by a committee who must give 10
approval to it. 11

Another good quality of CES is that there is little use of 12
completing coursework by listening to audio tapes and an- 13
swering questions on them. Instead CES requires research and 14
the writing of full essays. If the research and essay writing are 15
done under the supervision of the qualified mentor, then that 16
would seem to offer better learning. 17

CES offers a Master of Divinity, and a Master of Theology, 18
and doctorates in Religion, Ministry, and Theology. Students 19
are required to subscribe to belief in the Bible's inerrancy, the 20
Trinity, the vicarious atonement by Christ, the literal, bodily 21
resurrection of Jesus, and His Second Coming. The school is 22
interdenominational. 23

Northwestern Theological Seminary 24

This school offers remarkably "dumb downed" require- 25
ments for acquiring distance education masters' and doctoral 26
degrees. The Ph.D. core coursework, for example, consists of 27
five courses: Old Testament Survey, New Testament Survey, 28

1 Introduction to Systematic Theology, Bible Study Methods,
2 and Hermeneutics. Surely most anyone will note that such
3 coursework is not at doctoral level but at an undergraduate
4 level. Or, the school offers graduate, including, a doctoral de-
5 gree, by thesis or dissertation in a mere 90 days. In contrast,
6 this present writer's GAAP research doctorate took four years
7 to complete. But this generous giving away of graduate de-
8 grees is equaled by the school's lack of tuition. Instead, a "love
9 gift" of \$1900 is donated. One can buy a doctorate for less than
10 \$2000! What a deal! Buy three of them and be called "Dr., Dr.,
11 Dr. Brown." Buy a whole mess of diplomas and cover your wall
12 with them.

13 The seminary's online catalogue does not list the names of
14 the schools from which the professors earned their degrees.
15 What a surprise! That is one of the first things the prospective
16 student should note in considering any institution. Further,
17 the seminary claims that it does not seek government ap-
18 proved accreditation because that would require it to forsake
19 its Christian principles. Really?! Instead it claims accreditation
20 from the International Association for Christian Educational
21 Accountability which requires only an online application
22 plus a yearly fee of \$3975 to gain "accreditation." Ever hear of
23 wolves in sheep's clothing?

24 Jacksonville Theological Seminary

25 This school offers an amazing 17 different masters' degrees
26 plus 15 different doctorates. Tuition for these degrees range
27 from \$285 to \$335 per course. Courses are taught by "facilita-
28 tors" and JTS has about 100 of these facilitators. All are called

“Dr.” 100 doctors, imagine that! But no sources are listed indicating where their doctorates are earned. Zippo, up goes the red flag again. The website includes an application to become a facilitator. To be considered requires a fee of \$1000. For that the facilitator gets a “foundational curriculum package” for 100 courses. Coursework includes audios and textbooks and responses to these are submitted online. Uh huh. Buy a package of lessons and presto become a professor.

International Seminary of Orange County, Fla,

This school, which claims no accreditation, is said to have graduated 20, 000 students in 79 countries. It offers seven masters’ degrees and five doctorates. Masters and doctoral programs range from \$3000-\$4300. A 20% discount is offered to those who pay the entire degree tuition up front. Courses are taught by “home study” wherein the student reads textbooks and writes research papers. Most of the school’s scores of faculty members have degrees from unidentified schools. The eight required Doctor of Theology courses include such as Old Testament Survey, New Testament Survey, and Introduction to Christian Theology. Please! Survey and introductory courses are not doctoral course!

*Andersonville Seminary

This seminary in Georgia was founded in 1981 by Jimmy Hayes. It claims to have 7000 students and 30,000 graduates. The seminary has a religious exemption from the state, is certified by the U.S. Distance Learning Association, and is an

1 affiliate member of ABHE. However, none of this consists of
2 recognized accreditation.

3 Total graduate degree tuition ranges from \$1500 to \$2500.
4 Course work often consists of listening to audio recordings
5 and reporting in writing on textbooks. The school's doctrinal
6 statement includes an emphasis on the King James Version
7 being inspired and inerrant, evangelical views of salvation
8 (with eternal security of the believer), Christ and the Trinity,
9 baptism by immersion, and the Pre Tribulational view of the
10 Second Coming. Andersonville's academics have both strong
11 and weak points to note. Included in the former is the number
12 of semester hours and time expected to complete graduate de-
13 grees. The M. Div, for example, requires 74 or more semester
14 hours depending on which concentration is chosen. The ex-
15 pected duration required is three years, but the student can
16 proceed at his or her own pace. The D. Min. degree is 30 semes-
17 ter hours. The Th.D. requires 45 semester units beyond the 126
18 hour Th.M. plus a 50,000word dissertation. Another unusual
19 feature at Andersonville is the requirement of coursework in
20 the original languages in some graduate degrees.

21 But what would be seen as a major flaw in the minds of
22 many evangelical educators is the unaccredited and ingrown
23 doctoral degrees of those instructing in doctoral programs
24 at Andersonville. For example, the two professors teaching
25 the Th.D. in John's Writings only possess doctorates from
26 Andersonville and a third professor is Jimmy Hayes with a
27 doctorate from Great Plains Baptist which also is unaccred-
28 ited. C.M. Hayes who teaches the courses Addictive Behavior
29 and Counseling the Depressed in the D. Min in Counseling

also only has an Andersonville doctorate. You can't teach 1
what you don't know. 2

A bit perplexingly deceitful is that on occasion, as in the in 3
the D. Min in Christian Education where Kenneth Gangel and 4
John Feinberg are named, what is really is the case is that only 5
audios and or books by these respected educators are used. 6
Yet they are listed as if the persons named are actually them- 7
selves teaching the classes. These two are not, of course, in the 8
Andersonville faculty. 9

Freedom Bible College and Seminary 10

This school claims that it is recognized "world-wide." 11
Actually, I had never before heard of it. But one might imagine 12
that the naïve would think "recognized world-wide!! Guess I 13
better jump on that one!" The school offers six masters' de- 14
grees and six doctorates, but no faculty is listed as teaching 15
the courses leading to these degrees. Red Flag Alert! Red Flag 16
Alert! However, the school offers, for a price, of course, to al- 17
low churches to set up their own Freedom satellite school and 18
offer the same graduate degrees using the curriculum supplied 19
by of Freedom. What a great idea! We all can become doctors! 20
The Freedom degrees are not free, however. The doctorate is 21
\$7950 and the M.Div. is \$6889. Buy hey, isn't it worth shell- 22
ing out \$7950 to be called "Dr."? The school is "accredited" by 23
the unrecognized National Association of Private Theological 24
Institutions and the International Commission on Academic 25
Accreditation. See the value of unaccredited accreditors? 26
Fakery and deceit! 27

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*Newburg Seminary

1

2 Newburgh is a distance education school in Indiana and
3 is “accredited” by the Transworld Accrediting Commission
4 International – which is an unrecognized accreditor-to of-
5 fer a large number of doctorates including, I now take a deep
6 breath, “PhDs in Apologetics, Leadership, Preaching, Bible,
7 Ministry, Counseling, Church History, Bible Archeology,
8 African-American Ministry, Christian Education, and Sales
9 and Marketing.” Whew, what a list! In addition, the Th.D. the
10 Ed. D., the D. Min. and an earned D.D. are also awarded. Ph.D.
11 tuition is less than \$3000 total. Just think, I could buy two
12 Newburgh docs for the price of one Freedom doc.

13 This seminary appears to offer doctorates in more disci-
14 plines than it has professors, and the capability of some to
15 adequately supervisor such Ph.D. concentrations are very
16 suspect. For example, no professor of Christian education or
17 archeology is listed as having a regionally or nationally ac-
18 credited doctorate in these areas. It appears that “graders” of
19 submitted work are much responsible for the education of
20 doctoral level students-not those with recognized doctorates.

21 The coursework for a Ph.D. at Newburgh consists of six
22 courses. That is an incredibly modest requirement. Each
23 course consists of reading one book which is often introduc-
24 tory to the discipline as “New Testament Survey.” For each
25 textbook a written summary of the contents is required of
26 at least 10 pages. Phony! Incredibly Phony! As said, “graders”
27 mark these assignments. Additionally, a dissertation of 60-120
28 pages which may have a mere 20 bibliographic entries is sub-
29 mitted. That completes the requirements for the Ph.D.

One may observe that such inconsequential requirements could allow a person to accumulate a small collection of Newburgh doctorates as did one Newburgh professor, William Perry, who acquired Newburgh Ph.Ds in both Church History and Christian Counseling plus a Th.D. from the same! One may earn a second doctorate from this school with only three courses not six. Hopefully, most are aware that such inadequate requirements for an earned doctorate are an affront to those who work hard to earn real graduate degrees.

Covington Theological Seminary 10

This school having multiple teaching sites and claiming over 110 professors and advisors is “accredited” by the unapproved Accrediting Commission International. That is one red flag. In Covington’s 99 page “full” catalogue the sources of the academic qualifications of professors are not listed. That is a second “red flag.” The Covington Master of Divinity degree includes no work in Greek and Hebrew. The D.R.E. and Th.D. doctoral degrees Covington offers can be earned without having any training at all in the Biblical languages. One, therefore, earn a doctoral degree in Christian Scripture without ever taking coursework in the languages of Scripture. That is third “red flag.” One seeking graduate seminary education through Covington surely would not be looking for a quality learning experience.

The North American Reformed Seminary 25

This school is very interesting, and it is unusual in that it while unaccredited it yet appears to have good course

1 and degree expectations. The school's M. Div. curriculum
2 includes six hours of Hebrew and six of Greek. TNARS of-
3 fers two doctoral degrees, one in Puritan Studies and one in
4 Church History. These Th.D. degrees have the minimum pre-
5 requisite of a 60hour masters including the Biblical languages.
6 Solid textbooks and substantial assignments are listed on the
7 seminary's website. At least some classes use recorded audio
8 lectures.

9 Two unique features are noted: First, instead of having
10 a faculty, the student chooses a mentor who is approved by
11 the school. The mentor- hopefully well qualified -guides the
12 student through completing required coursework. Second, it
13 appears from the website that the seminary, itself, has no tu-
14 ition fees. The student can finish the degree without owing
15 the school money. One supposes that the mentor charges the
16 student a fee for guidance and assistance.

17 Christian Leadership University

18 This Charismatic oriented school offers distance under-
19 graduate, masters, and doctoral degrees with the tuition rate
20 of \$100 per credit. The institution is accredited by the unrec-
21 ognized Christian Accreditation International and is certified
22 by the Apostolic Council on Educational Accountability. The
23 school states that it chooses not to have government restric-
24 tions on its programs and notes that Jesus, Himself, would not
25 be allowed to teach under such regulations. This, of course,
26 is a gross misrepresentation as it is the practice of many fine
27 schools having government regional or national accredita-
28 tion to teach high Christian standards, morals and evangelical

theology with no government interference. And Jesus was, 1
of course, able to teach both in synagogues and the Temple. It 2
was His message which got our Lord murdered, not His lack of 3
formal, academic qualifications. CLU, clearly, stands no chance 4
of ever being genuinely accredited in its present state, and it 5
misrepresents that situation by claiming that it would not 6
want accreditation anyway. This is “mill-speak” verbiage. 7

The school impresses one with at times going far beyond 8
in its dogma and teaching than what is typically seen in oth- 9
er charismatic institutions such as those of the Assembly of 10
God schools. The theme of receiving modern revelation by fo- 11
cusing on Jesus and allowing the Spirit to flow spontaneous 12
thoughts and pictures into one’s mind is repeatedly seen in the 13
school’s teaching positions and some courses. Doctorates in 14
Divine Healing and Prophetic Decree are offered. Coursework 15
in dream interpretation is even offered. 16

Several other questionable features in this school’s academ- 17
ics should be noted. The Doctor of Biblical Studies requires no 18
preparation or coursework in the biblical languages. Life ex- 19
periences can be counted toward graduate degrees. No faculty 20
member is listed as having a recognized accredited doctorate. 21
In fact, some faculty members have no degrees at all. This, one 22
supposes, could be seen as quite permissible where academics 23
focus on the Holy Spirit spontaneously providing one’s mind 24
with revelation or illumination in pictures and thoughts. 25
What qualifies a faculty member could be seen as his or her 26
supposed encounters with said revelation or illumination by 27
the Spirit. BIG RED FLAGS! 28

The school incredibly offers complete programs up 29
through the doctoral level which local churches can use with 30

1 their membership and advanced degrees are awarded by CLU
2 upon completion. Would a local church have members or staff
3 qualified to supervise doctoral level coursework? These prac-
4 tices should give the prospective student much concern. The
5 work of the Spirit in believers certainly must not be discount-
6 ed, but neither should it be confused with earning academic
7 credentials.

8 Life Christian University

9 This school according to onlinechristiancolleges.com is ac-
10 credited and is known for “producing top quality education.”
11 The facts rather are that LCU’s accreditor is The Accrediting
12 Commission International which offers “immediate and au-
13 tomatic” accreditation. The school’s online site lists a page of
14 faculty with unaccredited degrees like an associate professor
15 of Bible and Theology whose education is from Eagles’ Nest
16 Ministers’ Training Center, Rhema Bible Training Center, and
17 LCU, itself. Indications of the school’s lack of rigor is the re-
18 quirement for a Ph. D. in Theology which has the pre- requi-
19 site of ten years of ministry experience plus the completion
20 of only five post-graduate courses and a 150word disserta-
21 tion. Recipients of the LCU Ph.D. include Benny Hinn, Joyce
22 Meyers, and Kenneth Copeland. Neither the accreditation
23 status, the academic qualifications of the professors or degree
24 requirements allow LCU to “produce top quality education.”

BEING HONEST FOR CHRIST 2

Believers ought to do their best for Christ in every area of life. 3
Being a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1) warrants that conclu- 4
sion. But when it comes to formal training in theological stud- 5
ies, doing one's best is not to be measured just by having a di- 6
ploma but by whether one did the hard work required to earn 7
that degree. Only a small fraction of unaccredited seminaries 8
has a modicum of respectability in their faculty and course- 9
work. The vast majority do not. This writer cannot believe 10
that is God's will for his followers to claim advanced academic 11
qualifications in theology or Bible in schools, which require 12
much less rigor than is needed in accredited schools, and then 13
vainly to call themselves "Dr." Has God called us to fakery? 14
Nothing about a Christian should be faked or substandard in- 15
cluding his formal education. 16

Perhaps you, with an unaccredited doctorate, are never- 17
theless doing good work for our Lord. That's great. But do you 18
have to pretend to be a "Dr." to do that? Go online and honestly 19
compare the rigor required to get your unaccredited doctorate 20
with what is required to earn a real doctorate in an accredited 21
school. You will soon realize the stark difference. Let's be hon- 22
est. Honesty is a Christian trait, right? Being honest glorifies 23

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1 Jesus. But calling yourself “Dr.” without completing genuine,
2 rigorous doctoral studies is not being honest. Yes, keep on do-
3 ing good work for Christ, but don’t call yourself “Dr.” unless
4 you have really earned that title by doing the strenuous, aca-
5 demic labor associated with it over years.

6 Doing that is a sham on the people of God, and it is a stench
7 reaching up to heaven.

8 Let the deceit stop!

9

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