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The Rise of the Professional Doctor of Ministry Degree in the Association of Theological Schools

Donald L. Tucker

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A Brief Review of Professional Doctorates

THE question about the appropriateness of the PhD for advanced study focusing on applied skill and learning rather than pure research has existed since the beginnings of the PhD in Germany. British universities long resisted the PhD at least partly because of its limited scope and narrow focus on research at the expense of teaching and other scholarship. By 1900, the PhD in the United States was recognized as the standard degree for academics. It meant 'prolonged, specialized, and abstract training, par excellence'.[1] But what degree should be given to those demonstrating academic and professional competence as practitioners? What about the legitimacy of professional degrees not intended for pure research or teaching?

John L. Chase, from the United States Office of Education, in a summary of doctoral degrees awarded by United States institutions, reports thirty-four different doctoral degrees besides the PhD and EdD conferred in 1961-1962. And in the decade from 1990 to 1999, professional doctorates in at least twenty-five fields were iden-

1 Roger L. Geiger, *To Advance Knowledge: The Growth of American Research Universities, 1900-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 210. For the United Kingdom, see the recent *Professional Doctorates*, UK Council for Graduate Education, 2002.

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tified in the United Kingdom.[2] Chase and others question the proliferation of doctorates and express concern that additional doctoral degrees might dilute the value of the PhD. At its 1964 annual meeting, the Council of Graduate Schools reviewed twenty-four differently titled doctor's degrees in 'professional' fields.[3] Discussions centred around the needs and definitions of the doctorate. A host of questions arise: Can the degree be justified? What are the qualifications? Who should review the degree? Where is the responsibility for the standards? Are professional associations influencing degree requirements? Is there too much specialization? Is the PhD too rigid? What about admissions criteria? How do these fit the interests of the university?

In the ensuing decades, professional doctorates in the United States continued to flourish. In the USA, differences between degrees are often muddled. Some even suggest that the PhD itself has become a professional degree.[4] The Council of Graduate Schools recognizes the place of the professional doctorate, insisting that admissions and completion criteria be clear. But challenges to their appropriateness remain. The distinctions between applied and traditional research are unclear. At their sessions in 1980, the Council again confronted concerns about professional degrees. Robert Amme of the University of Denver observed the clear trend that the differences between PhD and professional doctorates 'have become rather blurred'. Daniel Zaffarano from Iowa State University concurred. He states unequivocally, 'there is no real difference between the professional doctorate and the research doctorate'. F. N. Andrews of Purdue University concluded that, 'it appears that more and more professionals want to be called *doctor* [italics in original]'. Finally, at the same meeting, Paul Albrecht from the Claremont Graduate School summarised with these comments: 'A sharp distinction between academic and professional graduate programs is becoming more and more inappropriate and anachronistic; academic programs flirt with applied components, professional programs emulate academic values and methods.'[5]

In clergy education, one of the more extraordinary developments in North America has been the explosive rise of the professional Doctor of Ministry degree. Debates within the Association of Theological Schools and Seminaries

2 Tom Bourner, Rachel Bowden and Stuart Laing, 'Professional Doctorates in England', *Studies in Higher Education* 26 (1), pp. 65-83.

3 Robert A. Alberty, 'The Doctoral Degrees,' Council of Graduate Schools, *Proceedings* 4 (December 1964), p. 105.

4 Stephen H. Spurr, *Academic Degree Structures: Innovative Approaches. Principles of Reform in Degree Structures in the United States* (New York: The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education and McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1970), pp. 149-150.

5 Council of Graduate Schools, 'The Professional Doctorate', *Proceedings* 20 (December 1980), pp. 31-46. See also Council of Graduate Schools, Proceedings 22 (December 1982), p. 80.

in the United States and Canada (ATS)[6] concerning the need for a professional doctorate for ministry began as early as 1932 when ATS first adopted statements regarding the nature and requirements for doctoral degrees.[7] The fascinating history of the debates is covered adequately by Marvin J. Taylor, former Associate Director of ATS, and will not be covered here.[8] This review will concentrate on major trends giving initial and continued impetus to this phenomenon.

Defining the Professional Doctorate

The use of professional doctorates in the United Kingdom is a rather recent phenomenon (the first professional doctorates were given in the late 1980s and early 1990s) although higher doctorates based upon recognition of published works or distinguished contributions to a field of study had been offered since 1882.[9] Recent concerns in Europe regarding the place of the professional doctorate echo sentiments found in the United States.[10] The debate continues. What is the need? How do we balance the demands of the marketplace and the desires of the individual student? What is its purpose? How should we articulate the distinction between the professional doctorate and the traditional PhD? What educational process should be followed to complete the degree? Who should take the degree? What are the factors for assessing competence and validity? What about the perceived value and legitimacy of the finished product?

Stephen Hoddell of the University of the West of England explores the similarities and dissimilarities between 'professional' doctorates and the traditional PhD in the United Kingdom.[11]

6 Throughout this essay, the abbreviation ATS will represent the Association of Theological Schools in United States and Canada. Prior to 1974, ATS was known as the American Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (AATS). Initially, from 1936-1940, ATS was known as the Conference of Theological Seminaries and Colleges in the United States and Canada. See Jesse H. Ziegler, 'Developing Standards for the Professional Doctorate' in *ATS Through Two Decades: Reflections on Theological Education 1960-1980* (Vandalia, Ohio: Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, 1984), pp. 62-63.

7 Conference of Theological Seminaries and Colleges in the United States and Canada, *Bulletin* 8 (July 1932), p. 15.

8 See Marvin J. Taylor, 'The Doctor of Ministry: History and Typology,' in G. Douglass Lewis, ed., *Papers from the National Symposium on Issues and Models of Doctor of Ministry Programs* (Hartford, Connecticut: Hartford Seminary Foundation, 1980), pp. 1-26.

9 See *Professional Doctorates*, UK Council for Graduate Education, 2002 and J. McGinnety and R. McDougall, *The Professional Doctorate: An Old Qualification in a New University* (University of East London), p. 16.

10 For an excellent summary of developments see the recently published work by David Scott, Andrew Brown, Ingrid Lunt and Lucy Thorne, *Professional Doctorates: Integrating Professional and Academic Knowledge* (Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press, 2004).

11 'The Professional Doctorate and the PhD—Converging or Diverging Lines', by Stephen Hoddell; presentation to the annual conference of SRHE, University of Leicester, 21 December 2000.

Hoddell wrestles first with the definition of professional doctorate and identifies three distinctive characteristics. Firstly, the doctorate has the subject within the title of the degree (such as Doctor of Engineering or Doctor of Business Administration). Second, the subject area is professional, rather than academic, in its focus. Third, much of the programme is completed through taking courses rather than through independent research. And although Hodden attempts to outline the differences and similarities between professional doctorates and the traditional PhD in England, the comparative factors have so many exceptions that a definitive distinction cannot be maintained. Another attempt to clarify differences is presented by Rachel Bowden, Tom Bourner and Stuart Laing. They identify twenty differences between professional doctorates and traditional PhDs.[12] They conclude that differences between doctorates are sometimes harder to identify but that professional doctorates in England and Australia are different from PhDs. Others suggest difficulty in identifying any rigid distinctions. But despite these attempts at differentiation, current trends in processes, requirements, and final product tend to overlap.[13]

Peter D. Syverson of the Doctorate Records Project, National Research Council, in a definition of the research doctorate reveals the ambiguity of such a task. For example, in early days, the Doctor of Ministry was considered by some institutions to be a research degree (Catholic University, University of Chicago, Midwestern Baptist, New Orleans Baptist, Southwestern Baptist, Western Conservative Baptist), but by others to be a professional degree (Andrews, Aquinas, Biola, Boston, Drew, Princeton Theological Seminary, Southern Baptist, Texas Christian, Union Seminary in Virginia).

Another degree oriented toward practical ministry, the Doctor of Missiology (DMiss), suffers from the same confusion. Syverson concludes that the Doctor of Missiology is 'of a professional nature' and should not be included in the definition of research doctorate. Ironically, the two largest schools offering the DMiss initially placed them in different categories. In 1993, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Illinois listed the DMiss under the catalog section, 'Academic Doctoral Level Programs', and the Doctor of Ministry under 'Professional Doctoral Level Program'. Fuller Theological Seminary in California offers the DMiss ('the highest level of professional certification in missiology') through the School of World Missions,

12 'Professional Doctorates in England and Australia: Not a World of Difference', *Higher Education Review* 35, no. 1 (2002), pp. 3-23.

13 See UK Council for Graduate Education, 'Quality Standards of Postgraduate Research Degrees', 1996 and R. H. Spark, 'Professional Doctorates: A Discussion Paper', Occasional Paper GS 97/3, Australian National University, The Graduate School, 1997. The PhD in Europe is given based mostly upon research leading to the dissertation with little classroom teaching activity. For concerns about the place of the PhD in preparation for professional work, see Jules B. LaPidus, 'Doctoral Education: Preparing for the Future', Council of Graduate Schools, 1997.

but the Doctor of Ministry ('a professional degree'), through the Continuing and Extended Education division.[14] The U.S. Department of Education includes the Doctor of Ministry in its annual list of earned doctorates (along with PhD, EdD, DMA, and others), but excludes MD, DDS, JD and others as 'professional' degrees.

In 1991, ATS reorganized its categories for doctoral degrees into 'professional doctoral programs' and 'advanced research and academic degree programs'. In current ATS reports, professional doctorates include the Doctor of Ministry (DMin), Doctor of Missiology (DMiss), Doctor of Education (EdD), Doctor of Sacred Music (SMD), Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA), and Doctor of Church Music (DCM). Advanced research and academic doctorates include Doctor of Theology (ThD), Doctor of Sacred Theology (STD), and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degrees.

A Professional Doctorate for Clergy

As defined by the UK Council of Graduate Studies, 'a professional doctorate is a programme of advanced study and research which, whilst satisfying the University criteria for the award of a doctorate, is designed to meet the specific needs of a professional group external to the University, and which develops the capability of individuals to work within a professional context'. In a similar vein, the Association of Theological Schools categorizes the Doctor of Ministry under 'Advanced Programs Oriented toward Ministerial Leadership'.

The primary goal of the DMin is the enhancement of professional competence within the ministerial ranks. It requires not only periods of study on the main campus of the institution offering the degree, but active connection with the 'ministerial context as a learning environment'. Specifically, the degree standards emphasize an advanced understanding of the nature and purpose of ministry, enhanced competencies in pastoral analysis and ministerial skills, the integration of these dimensions into the theologically reflective practice of ministry, new knowledge about the practice of ministry, and continued growth in spiritual maturity.

Reflecting the advanced nature of the degree and its focus on professionalism, entrance requirements include not only the Master of Divinity (the first professional degree for clergy) or its equivalency, but at least three years of experience in ministry since earning the first degree. The DMin should focus on advanced understanding, interdisciplinary competence, comprehensiveness, integration, and critical understanding, demonstrating 'pastoral leadership at its most mature and effective level'.[15]

14 See catalogs of *Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1993-1994*, pp. 120, 137 and *Fuller Theological Seminary 1992*, pp. 57, 103.

15 See *ATS Accreditation Standards*, specifically Section F: Doctor of Ministry. Available online at <www.ats.edu/accredit/stantoc.htm.>

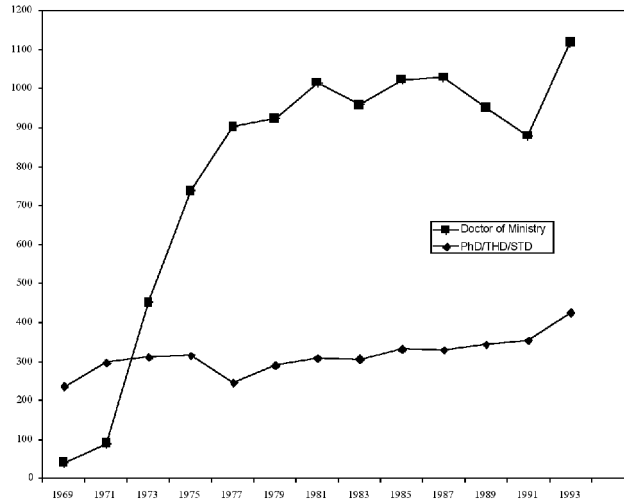

Figure 1. Doctoral Graduates in ATS Schools

Rise of the Doctor of Ministry in North America

Officially approved by the Association of Theological Schools in 1970 as a degree program for advanced ministerial leadership, the Doctor of Ministry (DMin) is now recognized as the standard terminal professional degree for practising clergy. In the decades of the 1980s and 1990s, between eight hundred and twelve hundred Doctor of Ministry degrees were conferred each year. From 1970 through 1995, more than 20,000 professional doctoral degrees for ministry were granted. See Figure 1 above.

Given the fact that prior to 1990 less than ninety schools were approved to offer the program, this is an astounding number. If all approved seminaries offering the terminal professional ministry degree graduated an equal number of Doctor of Ministry students, the average number at each institution would be more than 220 graduates each year! When examined closely, this calculation is even more remarkable. Nearly forty percent of all Doctor of Ministry students in 1994 were enrolled in only seven theological seminaries (Columbia, Fuller, McCormick, Reformed, San Francisco, Trinity Evangelical, and United). By 1995, headcount enrolment in the Doctor of Ministry at these seven schools ranged from 260 to nearly 750 students. Only fourteen other ATS institutions enrol more than one hundred Doctor of Ministry students each year.

This staggering rise in 'professional' doctoral degrees in comparison with traditional 'research' degrees is evident in the numbers. In 1969, seven schools enrolled 201 students in the Doctor of Ministry (or its precursor,

the related Doctor of Religion) program. At the same time, 1,466 were enrolled in the more traditional PhD (and the related ThD and STD) programs within the seminaries and graduate schools of ATS. Within four years of its approval, the number of Doctor of Ministry students surpassed the total number of traditional doctoral students and by 1977 the ratio of Doctor of Ministry students doubled that of those in traditional research doctorates.

ATS defines terminal 'professional doctoral programs' (those intended for practitioners) as Doctor of Ministry (DMin), Doctor of Missiology (DMiss), Doctor of Education (EdD), Doctor of Scared Music (SMD), Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA), and Doctor of Church Music (DCM). In contrast, 'advanced research and academic degree programs' at the terminal degree level (those intended for researchers and teachers) include Doctor of Theology (ThD), Doctor of Sacred Theology (STD) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). See Figure 2 below.

Officially, the American Association of Theological Schools did not approve the Doctor of Ministry degree until its biennial meeting in 1970. Prior to this, seven schools offered theological doctorates of a professional nature which subsequently became Doctor of Ministry programs. By 1979, enrolment in Doctor of Ministry programs increased exponentially to 5,327 students in 84 different institutions accredited by ATS. At the same time, enrolment in traditional PhD programs offered in ATS schools remained relatively constant. Through the decade of the 1980s enrolment growth in Doctor of Ministry programs was less rapid but still steady. By 1989, enrolment reached

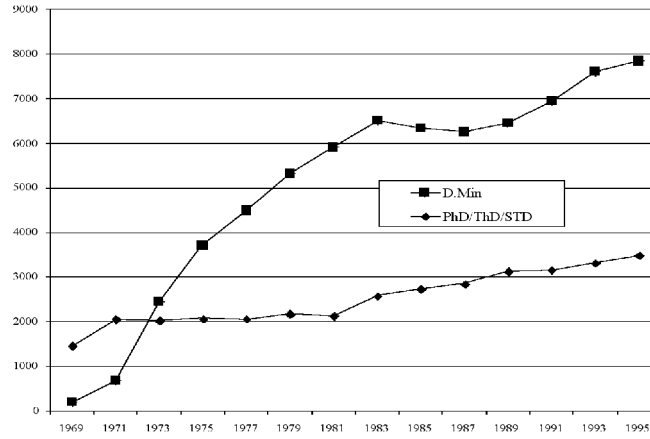

Figure 2. Headcount Enrolment—Doctoral Programs

6,459 in 87 different institutions.[16]

Besides the more than 20,000 Doctor of Ministry graduates of programs established since 1970, nearly 8000 additional students were in process of completion in 1995 within the 100 accredited institutions offering programs.[17] Enrolment in the Doctor of Ministry remained relatively stable supplanting enrolments in other 'professional' (as defined by ATS) degree categories of Doctor of Education, Doctor of Missiology, and Doctor of Musical Arts which report steep enrollment declines. For example, 1990 headcount enrolment in Doctor of Ministry programs was 6,738. Headcount enrolment in 'academic and research' doctorates (PhD, ThD, and STD programs) reached 2,267, but still less than half the enrolment in Doctor of Ministry degree programs.

Enrolment in other 'professional' doctorates (Doctor of Missiology, Doctor of Education and the similar Doctor of Religious Education, and Doctor of Musical Arts or Doctor of Sacred Music) was less than one-tenth of this number. Between 1993 and 1997 Doctor of Ministry programs showed an aggregate increase of 4.7 percent. In this same time period, Doctor of Education enrollments declined by 61.8 percent, Doctor of Missiology enrollment decreased by 44.3 percent, and Doctor of Musical Arts by 45.5 percent. Doctor of Missiology headcount enrollment was 296. Doctor of Education/ Doctor of Religious Education headcount is 326. Doctor of Musical Arts/Doctor of Sacred Music headcount enrollment was 54.[18]

Offered in two different formats, the Doctor of Ministry 'in-sequence' model adds a fourth year to the traditional three-year Master of Divinity degree sequence. The Master of Divinity (the first professional degree for ministry) is typically required prior to obtaining ordination. This in-sequence format, first introduced in the 1960s, provides impetus for the gradual development and formal acceptance of the Doctor of Ministry by ATS. The second option, the 'in-ministry' track, is designed for those already holding the Master of Divinity degree and engaged in full-time ministry. These in-ministry students typically complete additional part-time study toward the advanced degree over a period of two to four years.

In the early stages of the development of the Doctor of Ministry, the in-sequence model was the preferred pattern, particularly by women students. By the mid-1980s, the in-sequence

16 See yearly editions of the *Fact Book on Theological Education*. See also Marvin J. Taylor (Associate Director of ATS), 'The Doctor of Ministry: History and Typology', in *Papers from the National Symposium on Issues and Models of Doctor of Ministry Programs*, (Hartford, Connecticut March 6-8, 1980), edited by C. Douglass Lewis, pp. 6-7.

17 See Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS), *Bulletin 40* (1992-93), Part 4, Directory, for a list of accredited schools. In 1993, there were a total of 187 accredited schools, 25 associate schools, and 7 candidates for ATS accreditation.

18 Jonathan Strom and Daniel Aleshire, eds. *Fact Book on Theological Education* (Pittsburgh, PA: The Association of Theological Schools, 1997-98), p. 23.

model declined drastically and the in-ministry model became the standard practice. By 1984, only ten institutions continued to offer the in-sequence degree track with a total enrolment of only 254 students (less than four percent of the total of Doctor of Ministry students in ATS schools). In contrast, eighty-eight institutions offered the in-ministry degree sequence with a total enrolment of 6,467 students. By 1987, the in-ministry model was clearly predominant with less than one percent (only fifty-one students in nine institutions) choosing the in-sequence degree track.[19]

Factors Influencing the Doctor of Ministry

It seems evident that at least four major forces provide a foundation in this time frame for the establishment and continued development of the Doctor of Ministry degree: (1) demographic shifts, including an influx of women into the seminaries and the rise of evangelicals; (2) the increasing pluralism and secularization of the university and associated divinity schools; (3) clergy status and reputation, particularly public perceptions of the profession; and (4) the ongoing academic debate (within both theological education and the larger field of graduate education) between 'professional' and 'academic' degrees compounded by uncertainty over standards and quality.

1. Demographic Shifts

During the twenty-five years between 1927 and 1952, United States church membership increased by nearly sixty percent while the overall general population increased only twenty-eight percent. Much of this growth occurred during the four years following World War II. The church growth trend continued well into the 1950s and 1960s. According to historian, Sydney Ahlstrom, several factors contributed to this growth including the economic upheaval from the crash of 1929, fear of Russia and Communism, an upsurge in civil religion and American patriotism, neo-orthodoxy, and evangelical revivalism. The growth in church membership and church construction along with rapid sales of Bibles and religious books is well documented.[20] Clergy are in demand. To meet the demand for clergy and other church leaders, enrolments in North American graduate theological schools rose rapidly. Seminary enrolment from 1960 to 1990 increased a phenomenal 300 percent, from 18,000 students to nearly 60,000 students.

The growth of evangelical seminaries is especially noteworthy and reaction to 'secularism' drove increasing enrolment in conservative institutions.

19 William Baumgartner, ed. *Fact Book on Theological Education* (Vandalia, OH: The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, 1984-85), pp. 5-6.

20 See Louis Gasper, *The Fundamentalist Movement 1930-1956* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1963), p. 127; Fred D. Layman, 'Contemporary Issues in Theological Education,' *The Asbury Theological Journal* 41 (Spring 1986), pp. 106-108 and George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

Of nineteen seminaries enrolling 100 or more Doctor of Ministry students in 1991 at least twelve of these are commonly identified as evangelical and conservative. The nineteen schools with 100 or more Doctor of Ministry students were Andover Newton, Boston University School of Theology, Columbia Theological Seminary, Drew University, Fuller Theological Seminary, Garrett-Evangelical Seminary, McCormick Theological Seminary, Midwestern Baptist, New York Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Princeton Theological Seminary, Reformed Theological Seminary, San Francisco Theological Seminary, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Southwestern Baptist, Talbot School of Theology, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, United Theological Seminary (Ohio), and Westminster Theological Seminary. This does not include Dallas Theological Seminary which enrolled 623 PhD students, but only 74 Doctor of Ministry students in 1991. Of special note is the fact that seven schools (Fuller, McCormick, San Francisco, Trinity Evangelical, Reformed Theological, Columbia, and Southern Baptist) enrolled over one-half of all Doctor of Ministry students in 1991.[21]

A second demographic factor affecting seminary growth was the increase in the number of women students. The decade of the 1970s shows considerable theological and sociological debate regarding the ordination and position of women clergy. The extent of the debate is beyond the scope of this report. Statistically, the continued acceptance and ordination of women clergy was clearly evident.

In 1974, women constituted 14.3 percent of total seminary enrolment. By 1979 this rose to 21.1 percent of total seminary enrolment. By 1984 women comprised twenty-five percent of total seminary enrolments but thirty percent of 'in-sequence' Doctor of Ministry students, choosing to remain in seminary for further study rather than enter the ministry immediately after completion of the Master of Divinity. Enrolment of women increased to slightly more than thirty percent of total seminary enrolment by 1991. And by this same year, one-third of overall enrolment in ATS schools were women. More specifically, women students in the seminary doctoral programs alone in 1995 made up more than thirty-three percent of ThD/STD enrolments, roughly thirty percent of PhD enrollment, and approximately thirteen percent of Doctor of Ministry enrolment.[22]

Compared to two decades earlier, women comprised a solid force in seminary enrollment and in seminary doctoral studies. Those who opted for doctoral studies at this juncture seemed more inclined to enter 'academic' degrees intended for teaching and research positions. It is likely that this

21 Gail King, ed., *Fact Book on Theological Education* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Association of Theological Schools, 1991-92).

22 *Fact Book*, 1991-1992, Table 2.20A, pp. 34-35. See also Martin E. Marty, 'Trends in Seminary Enrollments', *The Christian Century* 102 (Feb. 6-13, 1985): 116-117. Compare Daniel Aleshire and Jonathan Strom, eds., *Fact Book on Theological Education*, 1995-1996, p. 37 and Table 2.13 and Table 2.14, pp. 40-49.

percentage of women earning the Doctor of Ministry degree will increase as more women are continually ordained and gain prominence in denominational leadership positions. As more women earn the first professional degree (Master of Divinity) and the 'first generation' of women preachers gives way to the next, more terminal professional degrees will probably be awarded.

2. Pluralism and Secularization

To the Association of Theological Schools, more significant than the general trends in seminary growth, are the specific shifts of ideological orientation and educational purpose occurring in university religion departments during the 1950s and 1960s. These university departments—traditionally providing the graduate education for teachers of clergy—changed in profound ways. Claude Welch, in a major study, *Graduate Education in Religion: A Critical Appraisal*, suggests a 'crisis of identity' in graduate religious study and a confusion in theological degrees.[23] Welch remarks that seminaries 'in addition to the inevitable concerns about the weakening of their own privileged position, have been fearful (a) that the new university programs would be indifferent to the interest of professional education and of the religious communities and (b) that the movement to by-pass the intermediate professional degree would dilute the quality of graduate religious studies.'[24]

Ideological confusion reigns as the field of religious studies broadens to include history of religions, Eastern cultures, Islamic studies, and other interdisciplinary areas in addition to biblical and theological studies, Western culture and Judeo-Christian heritage. Students enter doctoral programs in religion without the traditional ministerial preparation of the first professional degree (Bachelor of Divinity or Master of Divinity), and even without any religious commitment.[25] Between 1951 and 1960, eleven new graduate programs in religion open. Between 1961 and 1970 twenty-seven additional programs arose. This is more than double the number of programs available before World War II.

Confusion in educational purpose (particularly regarding the validity of distinguishing between practical and research orientation) further mars the picture. The differentiation between the Doctor of Philosophy and Doctor of Theology is unrecognizable and requirements almost identical at many schools. Further, its intent as a teaching and research degree or for advancement of ministerial skills is ambiguous.

Requirements and expectations for the traditional Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) or the Doctor of Theology (ThD) are nearly identical in North American theological seminaries. The Doctor of Hebrew Letters (DHL) at the Jewish Theological Seminary (New York) is the equivalent of the PhD or ThD at a

23 Claude Welch, *Graduate Education in Religion: A Critical Appraisal* (Missoula: University of Montana Press, 1971). Since Welch speaks as the president of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) and on behalf of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) his study carries considerable weight.

24 Welch, *Graduate Education*, pp. 39-40.

25 Welch, *Graduate Education*, p. 43.

Protestant seminary. Program structures and curriculum expectations are similar. For example, during this time period, the PhD and ThD at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley (California), Harvard University (Massachusetts), Union Theological Seminary (New York), Columbia University (New York), and the PhD and Doctor of Hebrew Letters (DHL) at the Jewish Theological Seminary (New York), according to Welch, were 'academically indistinguishable.'[26] The introduction of the Doctor of Ministry as a 'professional doctorate' muddied the educational water even more.[27]

Given these developments, Welch calls for a significant reduction in doctoral programs in religion and theology. In *Secularization of the Academy*, historian George Marsden—reflecting on the influence of Welch—suggests that 'professors within seminaries and university divinity schools came out looking second rate. Welch… concludes that most seminaries, except for those connected to well-respected universities, were either 'marginal' or 'inadequate'.'[28] Further, 'religion departments increasingly could gain legitimacy by being oriented toward the non-Western, the non-conventional, and the (descriptively) non-Christian'. Arnold S. Nash, from a more theological than sociological angle, traces this secularization by exploring the development of the Latin and Greek linguistic understanding of 'humanity' with a contrasting distinction of 'divinity'.[29] In this environment, little attention is given to legitimate pastoral, denominational, or parish concerns.

William Hull, in a thoughtful response to Welch, analyses carefully the assumptions Welch makes. While agreeing that certain benefits can come from studying religion in a university setting, Hull offers 'three reasons to encourage rather than to discourage doctoral programs in denominational seminaries'.[30] Hull suggests that (1) *empirical realism*—the need to actually practise religion and spirituality; (2) *public leadership*—training leaders competent to deal with 'massive spiritual challenges of our times'; and (3) *creative coexistence*—'May both of our tribes increase!' is a better way than the retrenchment Welch proposes.[31] The real question remains: Are clergy receiving the appropriate and necessary education for their profession? Can a professional doctorate remedy these concerns? The quality and status of the doctorate is suspect. Credibility of the degrees is eroding.

3. Clergy Status and Reputation

If the report of Welch did not serve to tarnish clergy reputation and profes-

26 Welch, *Graduate Education*, pp. 35-37.
27 ATS, *Bulletin 29* (1970), p. 187.
28 George M. Marsden and Bradley J. Longfield, *Secularization of the Academy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 214.
29 Marsden and Longfield, *Secularization*, p. 35. See 'Everything Has A Theological Angle', in Keith R. Bridston and Dwight W. Culver, eds., *The Making of Ministers: Essays on Clergy Training Today* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing, 1964), pp. 248-263.
30 William E. Hull, 'Graduate Education in a Denominational Seminary,' *Review and Expositor* 70 (Winter 1973), pp. 49-61.
31 Hull, 'Graduate Education,' *Review and Expositor*, pp. 59-61.

sional status, it at least reinforced attitudes already prevalent. In 1928, the average salary of the Protestant minister was below that of most factory workers.[32] Minimal education was reflected in minimal pay. Protestant ministers were not highly regarded.

Church historian, E. Brooks Holifield (who also serves as a consultant for the University of Mississippi Center for the Study of Southern Culture and professor of American church history at Candler School of Theology, Emory University), an expert in the history of the American church and pastoral care, contends that, although esteemed as clergy, many local church pastors are looked down upon 'partially because of the churches' low educational standards'.[33] Less than one-third of Protestant clergy in this period graduated from college and seminary compared to two-thirds of Catholic priests who were both college and seminary graduates. '[E]ven the educated and better-paid ministers who drifted to the larger cities found it necessary to contend with a certain patronizing air', according to Holifield.[34] Twenty-five years later, educational standards were somewhat better, but still less than one-half of Protestant ministers had the equivalent of college or seminary graduation.[35]

While steep enrolment increases in the Doctor of Ministry attest to its popularity, concern about its academic credibility remain. For example, in 1989, of the 1,566 applicants to Doctor of Ministry programs, 1,391 were accepted and 1,141 actually enrolled. This means that nearly eighty-nine percent of Doctor of Ministry applicants in 1989 were accepted into programs. This acceptance rate was more than double the aggregate acceptance rate for all other doctoral programs offered in ATS schools. Even the acceptance rate for Master of Arts and Master of Divinity programs was five to ten percent lower than that for the Doctor of Ministry degree. In addition, only one-third of schools offering Doctor of Ministry programs reported a policy for minimum grade point average for entrance and only four schools required submission or consideration of Graduate Record Exam scores.[36]

While credibility is one thing, financial stability and survival is another. On the practical side, it is clear that enrolment in the professional doctorate is one major factor that stems an erosion in overall seminary revenue as the number of applications declined in the traditional Master of Divinity degree, considered the 'bread and butter' of seminary education and the standard degree for ordination in mainline denominations. Master of Divinity enrolments helped salvage a potentially bleak enrolment and financial scenario. Commenting on the effect of

32 E. Brooks Holifield, *A History of Pastoral Care in America: From Salvation to Self-Realization* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), p. 217.

33 Holifield, *History of Pastoral Care*, p. 216.

34 Holifield, *History of Pastoral Care*, p. 217.

35 These statistics are compiled by Oren H. Baker, then executive secretary of ATS and professor of pastoral theology at Colgate-Rochester Divinity School. 'Theological Education: Protestant,' in L. E. Blauch, ed., *Education for the Professions* (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1955), p. 238.

36 Gail Buchwalter King, ed., *Fact Book on Theological Education for the Academic Years 1988-89 and 1989-90* (Pittsburgh, PA: Association of Theological Schools), pp. 23-24.

Doctor of Ministry students in overall seminary enrolment, Marvin Taylor reports that, 'it is readily apparent that the DMin is the major factor in the continued growth in professional enrollments. Without it all but one denominational group of schools would have had a decline in numbers of students.'[37]

A direct correlation between clergy status and reputation and the Doctor of Ministry degree has not been established. Analyses of motivations for entering Doctor of Ministry programs generally emphasize the desire for increased professional competence, desire for a structured relevant program of continuing education, denominational or congregational expectations, or similar sentiments.[38] Occasionally, one will admit the desire to get a better-paying position. Rarely does anyone mention ego and pride. Nevertheless, anecdotal evidence linking clergy desire for elevated status and the pursuit of the title 'doctor' is clear.

An editorial appearing in a theological journal in 1948 expresses well the sentiment for titles. Quoting from Ovid R. Sellers of McCormick Seminary, the editorial elaborates:

> It would be a mistake to hold that there is no cause for dissatisfaction about academic recognition in the ministry. If all ministers were called 'Mister,' probably there would be less cause for discontent; but there are the favored ones who have the degree of DD and so are entitled to be addressed as 'Doctor.' All ministers know that this degree means nothing in terms of scholarly achievement, but in the public eye the preacher who is a Doctor rates more veneration than does the parson who is only a Mister. In any group of young ministers, next to the question of vacancy and supply… is the award of the DD.

The writer then suggests that maybe the Doctor of Divinity should be routinely awarded to all ministers after pastoring ten years.[39]

Some even turn to 'degree mills' to purchase their status. In 1960, influential theologian Carl F. H. Henry, in a *Christianity Today* editorial, acknowledges that 'the depth of sin does not exempt the clergy, for whom pride remains a real temptation… The worship of degrees has gone entirely too

37 Marvin J. Taylor, ed., *Fact Book on Theological Education* (Vandalia, Ohio: Association of Theological Schools, 1974-75), p. 14.

38 Jackson W. Carroll and others, 'Pastor and Parish as Co-Learners in the Doctor of Ministry Program: An Experiment in Theological Education.' *Theological Education* 16, special issue (Winter 1980), p. 184. This special edition reports on an intensive analysis of the Hartford Seminary 1977 Doctor of Ministry program, including assumptions of motivational issues of clergy involved, and benefits of the program to both the clergy and congregations involved. See also, Jackson W. Carroll, 'Why Is the Doctor of Ministry So Popular?' *The Christian Century* 105 (February 3-10, 1988), pp. 106-107.

39 J. T. M.[cCosh?], 'Proposal for a Seminary DD Degree,' *Theological Observer*, pp. 790-791, quoting from the *Presbyterian* (April 17, 1948) which reprints an article from *McCormick Speaking* (December 1947).

far.'[40] In 1972, Lee Porter substantiated Henry's claim. 'Ministers are often eager to receive degrees. The number of degree mills that thrive by selling DD degrees is evidence enough.' According to this report, 308 colleges and universities conferred the honorary DD degree, with 'status-driven clergy' one of the most aggressive pursuers of prestige. Only the LHD and LLD. were given out in greater numbers.[41]

Of course, this desire for credibility is not new. Renowned church historian E. Harris Harbison suggests that Martin Luther used his doctorate to gain credibility and 'institutional significance' in his continual conflicts with Anabaptists. Harbison boldly asserts: 'Luther was not the first or the last to gain assurance from the belief that his right to speak out rested not only upon his inner call but also upon his DD [Doctor of Divinity].'[42]

David S. Schuller, in *Ministry in America*, a major study of forty-seven denominations in the 1970s, examines extensively the changing concepts of ministry, including the attitudes and expectations since World War II. He delineates clearly the desire of clergy to be viewed as professionals. 'In contrast with professionals in medicine, law, or academe, many clergy appear unsure and self-deprecating. They suspect that they are less intelligent, that their education is not as good, and that their skills are not so highly developed.'[43] Certainly the prestige and advanced training associated with the title Doctor complements the respect inherent in the position and title of Reverend.

4. The 'Professional' versus 'Academic' Debate

Beyond the general growth of seminary enrolment, the severing of denominational ties to secular universities, and the psychological impact of clergy status, there is the on-going debate concerning purpose, content, and validity of the 'professional' doctorate. Is pastoral ministry a profession? Is the education of ministers professional? These are questions asked by ATS in its discussions of the nature and purpose of theological education and continued arguments over degree nomenclature.

40 'The Scandal of Bogus Degrees', *Christianity Today* 4 (May 9, 1960), p. 24. In the same vein is O. W. Frost, 'Pedagogical Quakery', *Christian Century* (July 27, 1960), pp. 880-881. For a more recent acknowledgement of the same problem, see Tim Minnery, 'Shortcut Graduate Degrees Shortchange Everybody', *Christianity Today* 25 (May 29, 1981), pp. 26-29.

41 Lee Porter, *Degrees for Sale* (New York: Arco Publishing, 1972), p. 143. A recent and thorough study of degree mills, including an overview of the FBI DipScam project, is the work by David W. Stewart and Henry A. Spille, *Diploma Mills: Degrees of Fraud* (New York: American Council on Education and Macmillan Publishing, 1988).

42 *The Christian Scholar in the Age of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), pp. 124-125.

43 Schuller, David S., Merton P. Strommen, and Milo L. Brekke, eds., *Ministry in America: A Report and Analysis, Based on an In-Depth Survey of 47 Denominations in the United States and Canada, with Interpretation by 18 Experts* (The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada and Search Institute). (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1980), p. 5.

'Theological Education as Professional Education,' the theme of a convocation held at Episcopal Theological School in January 1967, concluded a decade of debate about the kind of continuing education relevant to pastors.[44] Concern was widespread that 'turning everyone into a PhD research scholar' would hinder the ability to relate to the real life of the church.[45] Fifteen years earlier, Seward Hiltner argued before the faculty,

> there is no reason why the PhD should not be awarded for work in depth beginning with one of the functional fields as well as with one of the abstract fields… Or, if the PhD be too sacred to touch, at least there should be some other symbol to encourage exploration from the functional as well as the abstract side.[46]

In 1966, prior to any official endorsement from ATS, the University of Chicago authorizes a Doctor of Ministry for students who feel the need for practical professional education and, at the same time, adds a PhD in Practical Theology.[47] The selection of professional status is now in place. Even earlier, in 1960, San Francisco Theological Seminary establishes an in-service Doctor of Sacred Theology (STD) program for the continuing education of pastors. This course was designed to alternate summer residence study with in-ministry study over a five-year period, followed by a series of comprehensive exams and a dissertation research project; the entire program taking seven years to complete.[48]

In the initial stages of ATS debates over the Doctor of Ministry, many suggest using it as the first degree rather than the last—replacing the Master of Divinity—much like the professional degrees earned in medicine and law (the MD and JD respectively).[49] After a

44 'Theological Education as Professional Education', *Theological Education* 5 (Spring 1969), pp. 1-302. This trend toward professional degree nomenclature is also noted by Bruce L. Robinson, in 'Professionalism and Ministry Today', a report given at the thirteenth biennial meeting of the Association for Professional Education for Ministry, held in Atlanta, Georgia, June 13-16, 1974.

45 Franklin H. Littell, 'Protestant Seminary Education in America', in James Michael Lee and Louis J. Putz, eds., *Seminary Education in a Time of Change* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Fides Publisher, 1965), p. 552.

46 Seward Hiltner, 'The Professional Aspect of Theological Education', unpublished paper prepared for the 1952 annual retreat of the Federated Theology Faculty of the University of Chicago, at Green Lake, Wisconsin, October 1951, [photocopy], pp. 60-61, Alumni Archives, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey.

47 *One in Spirit: A Retrospective View of the University of Chicago on the Occasion of its Centennial* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago, 1991), p. 172.

48 Henry Babcock Adams, 'STD Education at San Francisco', *Theological Education* 1 (Summer 1965), pp. 223-225.

49 For a general overview, see 'Graduate and Professional Education' in Richard Hofstadter and C. DeWitt Hardy, *The Development and Scope of Higher Education in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press), pp. 57-100. See also William J. McGlothlin, *Patterns of Professional Education* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1960); W. Gordon Whaley, 'American Academic Degrees', *Educational Record* 47 (Fall 1966), pp. 525-537; and Edgar H. Schein and Diane W. Kommers, *Professional Education: Some New Directions* (New York: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and McGraw-Hill, 1972).

review of more than six hundred organizations, Connolly Gamble, Director of Continuing Education at Union Seminary in Virginia, argues that 'the minister belongs to the learned professions, standing in the company of educators, physicians, and lawyers'.[50] As early as 1949, Ernest C. Colwell, then Dean of the Divinity School at the University of Chicago, had suggested replacing the Bachelor of Divinity with a professional doctorate so that ministerial education would be seen as graduate and professional in nature.[51] In 1963, the School of Theology at Claremont (under the leadership of new President Ernest C. Colwell!) began a four-year Doctor of Religion (RelD) as the basic professional degree for ministry. When ATS, at its 1970 meeting (held in Claremont), voted to adopt the nomenclature Doctor of Ministry, Claremont changed its Doctor of Religion degree to the Doctor of Ministry.[52]

Educational Quality

Few comprehensive studies of the quality or effectiveness of the DMin exist. The first major study of the effects of the Doctor of Ministry is published by Auburn Theological Seminary and Hartford Seminary's Center for Social and Religious Research in 1987.[53] This study concludes that the advanced professional competence and critical theological reflection originally anticipated for the DMin is less evident than desired. Faculty bemoan that many students did not demonstrate advanced levels of reflection or competence. In addition, Carroll and Wheeler express concern about variations in quality from one program to another.

Since that time, however, ATS revised its standards and expectations for DMin study and clarified program goals. A more recent study conducted in 2002 (although limited in scope to responses of program directors present at one particular conference) suggests the strength of the DMin lies in the level of student theological reflection, a clear improvement over the first decade. However, the same report also suggests that weaknesses still exist in the lack of rigour in research design.[54]

Although some suggest an 'identity crisis' in DMin education[55] the expan-

50 Connolly C. Gamble, Jr., *The Continuing Theological Education of the American Minister: Report of a Survey* (American Association of Theological Schools, November 1960), p. 5. Gamble's survey included 124 ATS seminaries and 500 other agencies and institutions. See also Charles R. Feilding, *Education for Ministry* (Dayton, Ohio: AATS, 1966) and Owen C. Thomas, 'Professional Education and Theological Education', *Theological Education* 4 (Autumn 1967), pp. 556-565.

51 Allen J. Moore, 'The Doctor of Ministry a Decade Later', *Theological Education* 4 (Summer 1976), p. 219. Walter D. Wagoner makes this same suggestion in *Bachelor of Divinity* (New York: Association Press, 1963), p. 92.

52 Allen J. Moore, 'The Doctor of Ministry a Decade Later', *Theological Education* 4 (Summer 1976), p. 222.

53 Jackson W. Carroll and Barbara G. Wheeler, *A Study of Doctor of Ministry Programs* (Hartford Seminary, 1987).

54 Timothy D. Lincoln, 'The Quality of Doctor of Ministry Education in 2002: What Program Directors Think'. *Theological Education* 39, 2 (2003), pp. 137-148.

55 See Charles J. Conniry, Jr., 'Reducing the Identity Crisis in Doctor of Ministry Education', *Theological Education*, 40,1 (2004), pp. 137-152.

sion of programs and enrolments certainly attests to its popularity. The impact of this growth on clergy status, remuneration, and qualifications has not been fully explored. Concerns about quality and perception do not interfere with student enrolment. Even the original report of Carroll and Wheeler confirms the value of the degree in raising clergy confidence and self-esteem and in reaffirming commitment and enthusiasm for ministry.[56] The crisis may be exacerbated by PhD holders who look askance at what is perceived to be inferior. Clarity in degree expectations, a re-evaluation of desired faculty background and qualifications, and improved teaching in research structure may help reduce these concerns.

What Does the Future Hold?

The place of the professional doctorate, in both the university and the seminary, is clearly established. There will be no retreat. Debates in North America at the inception of the professional Doctor of Ministry, follow similar lines as those for other professional doctorates both in North America and more recently in the United Kingdom. The sheer volume of Doctor of Ministry degrees conferred between 1970 and 1995 certainly attests to its popularity. Its recognition as a legitimate doctorate degree 'to deepen the basic knowledge and skill in ministry' is generally not disputed although its credibility in regard to research and teaching is less certain. The Association of Theological Schools, in its degree standards, makes a distinction between the goals for the Doctor of Ministry (advanced expertise in ministerial practice) and the goals for the Doctor of Philosophy (theological scholarship for teaching, learning, and research). The vast majority of pastors who complete Doctor of Ministry programs report 'raised morale and self-esteem, increased enthusiasm about ordained ministry, and renewed commitment to their current jobs.'[57]

After more than thirty years, the initial euphoria is diminished and current statistics reveal stabilization in Doctor of Ministry enrolment, with modest new real growth. More crucial for long-term credibility are hints from faculty and administrators that the anticipated critical theological insight and significant contributions to research on the practice of ministry have not been realized.[58] Clearer definitions of purpose, rigorous evaluation, and serious attention to quality standards (in accepting new applicants and in examining final candidates for the degree) may well determine the future status for the 'Reverend Doctor'.

56 Jackson W. Carroll, 'Why Is the D.Min. So Popular?' *Christian Century* 105 (February 3-10, 1988), p. 107.

57 Jackson W. Carroll, 'Why Is the Doctor of Ministry So Popular?' *The Christian Century* 105 (Februaryv1988), pp. 107-108.

58 Compare responses by Faith Burgess, William Lesher, J. Randall Nichols and Ray S. Anderson in 'The Doctor of Ministry Program in the Context of Theological Education', *Theological Education* 23 (Spring 1987), pp.77-88.