



# Southwestern

JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY



James Leo Garrett Jr. and the  
Southwestern Theological Tradition



## EDITORIAL

The articles in the current issue of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology* are focused on James Leo Garrett Jr. and the Southwestern theological tradition. These articles from Dr. Garrett's students and admirers engage his theological contributions, including a look at his influence on Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary as well as Southwestern's influence on him.

The contributors to this issue include Wyman Richardson, who serves as the General Editor for the multi-volume series on *The Collected Writings of James Leo Garrett Jr., 1950-2015*, who frames his article around this series. Two of Garrett's outstanding students, Malcolm B. Yarnell III and Robert B. Stewart, offer insightful pieces. Yarnell serves as research professor of theology at Southwestern Seminary while Stewart occupies the Greer-Heard Chair of Faith and Culture at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Two of our contributors have been influenced by Garrett's work through their studies with Yarnell: Jason Duesing, who currently serves as provost at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, offers a look at Garrett's key contributions to the study of Baptist theology, while Peter Tie, who wrote his doctoral dissertation at Southwestern Seminary on aspects of Garrett's ecclesiology and who serves as assistant professor of theology at Christian Witness Theological Seminary, offers an article on the Trinity and the priesthood. Several of the articles were initially presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, November of 2021, around the theme of "James Leo Garrett Jr. (1925-2020): The Gentleman Theologian." The book review section includes illuminating reviews by Southwestern faculty members as well as others.

I am grateful for the contributions of each of these authors. Moreover, I am thankful for an editorial team that has worked collaboratively to produce this issue. While recognizing the participation

of many, I want to thank Robert W. Caldwell III, James A. Smith Sr., Ashley L. Allen, Andrew Streett, and Wang Yong Lee. I especially want to offer appreciation to Professor Caldwell for his efforts, even as we welcome Joshua Williams to the *SWJT* editorial team.

Dr. Garrett returned to teach theology at Southwestern Seminary during the 1979-80 academic year, having previously taught at his *alma mater* from 1949-59. From 1959-73, he held a faculty position in systematic and historical theology at Southern Seminary, and from 1973-79 he served as the director of the J. M. Dawson Institute on Church and State at Baylor University. As a student at Southwestern when he returned, I entered his classroom in patristic theology with fear and trembling. Garrett's reputation as a scholar and lecturer was indeed well deserved. Not only had he already held faculty positions at Southwestern, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Baylor, but he had received doctoral degrees from Southwestern and Harvard, as well as a graduate degree from Princeton. He had written widely and was recognized as the premier Baptist theologian of the second half of the twentieth century.

Among the many things I learned from Dr. Garrett were the importance of Christian orthodoxy and the need to clarify Baptist distinctives. I learned to appreciate the importance of church history and historical theology in formulating one's theology. I learned the value of understanding what others believe, especially those with whom you disagree. I learned the value of an irenic approach to theology, ministry, and relationships. One of the most important things I learned from him had to do with interactions with other Christians, traditions, and groups, and how to think about Christian unity and Christian cooperation. His interests in the church universal led him to engagement and conversation with believers from various traditions.

Garrett stressed the need for confession and cooperation, conviction and unity, and truth and love. He wanted to promote Christian unity at every opportunity since true believers belong to the same Lord. Ultimately, Garrett recognized that true unity must be based on true truth. Like Carl F. H. Henry, Garrett believed the church's witness to the world is stronger when the church is united, and that separation often leads to additional and unnecessary fragmentation, thus diminishing opportunities for renewal and reform. Dr. Garrett

would want us to continue to emphasize both truth and love, holiness and unity. He would want us to make every effort to love one another while seeking to live lives pleasing to our Lord. He would continue to call us to oneness (John 17:21-23) for the sake of advancing Great Commission efforts around the world.

I am grateful for the opportunity in this volume to join with other friends and colleagues to recognize Dr. Garrett's many contributions and to reflect on the significance of his work. Many across the Southern Baptist Convention and especially within the Southwestern family, would want to join me in expressing gratitude for his imprint on the lives of so many. A genuine Christian gentleman and a first-rate scholar, the contributors to this issue join me in saying thanks be to God for the life, ministry, writings, and legacy of James Leo Garrett Jr. (1925-2020).

*Soli Deo Gloria*

David S. Dockery

