



Southwestern

JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY



James Leo Garrett Jr. and the
Southwestern Theological Tradition





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Fall 2022 Issue
Vol. 65 No. 1

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The *Southwestern Journal of Theology* is indexed in the *ATLA Religion Database*, the *Southern Baptist Periodical Index*, and the *Christian Periodical Index*.

Books and software for review may be sent to the *SWJT* Editorial Office, The Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, P.O. Box 22608, Fort Worth, TX 76122. All other inquiries should be sent to this same address.

Please direct subscription correspondence and change of address notices to *SWJT* Editorial Office, The Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, P.O. Box 22608, Fort Worth, TX 76122. Change of address notices should include both the new and old addresses. A one-year (two issues) subscription in the United States is \$30. An international subscription is \$50.

Southwestern Journal of Theology (ISSN 0038-4828) is published at The Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, TX 76122. For the contents of back issues and ordering information, please see <https://swbts.edu/journal>.

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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



JAMES LEO GARRETT JR. AND THE SOUTHWESTERN THEOLOGICAL TRADITION

David S. Dockery*

This issue of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology* is designed to focus on the life, thought, and work of James Leo Garrett Jr. (1925-2020), a faithful Christ follower, a gentleman and a scholar, an influential Baptist thinker, and a systematic and historical theologian who invested most of his career at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. This article will attempt to offer insight regarding the theological tradition at Southwestern Seminary and the role it played in influencing Garrett's work as a theologian as well as looking at the important role he carried out in shaping this tradition.

I. SHAPERS OF THE SOUTHWESTERN THEOLOGICAL TRADITION

Garrett's theology did not develop in a vacuum, having been largely formed while studying with his mentor, W. T. Conner (1877-1952), who taught theology for four decades at Southwestern, an institution founded in 1908 by the visionary B. H. Carroll (1843-1914). We will seek to understand Garrett's theological contribution to Baptist and evangelical life by understanding better the context in which he did his work, a context informed and shaped by Carroll and Conner over the first four decades of the seminary's existence. Garrett enrolled as a student at Southwestern in the 1940s during the final decade of Conner's tenure. One cannot understand the Southwestern theological tradition apart from understanding the contributions of Carroll, Conner, and Garrett.

1. *B. H. Carroll*. Unlike the founders of the first seminary in Southern Baptist life, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary now located in Louisville, Kentucky, who were educated at and influenced

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by Brown University, Princeton Seminary, and the University of Virginia, the Southwestern founder lacked formal theological education. Carroll, who was largely self-taught, was, however, often described as brilliant by those who knew him.¹ Through his disciplined practice of reading nearly 300 pages each day, Carroll was regarded as the most thoughtful of Christian leaders in the Southwest in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In addition, he was a powerful preacher, gifted leader, and a person blessed with insightful organizational skills.²

While serving as the pastor of the highly regarded First Baptist Church of Waco, Texas, Carroll proposed a new Baptist state convention for Texas in the 1880s. This plan called for the consolidation of Waco University and Baylor University, with the newly created institution to be called Baylor University at Waco. Ministerial students were to be taught by university president Rufus Burleson and Carroll, in what was an expanded and escalated version of what had been practiced at Waco University since Carroll became pastor of First Baptist in Waco in 1871.³

Carroll immersed himself in this educational effort, which, prompted by personal circumstances in his life, eventually led to his transition from the tall-steeple church pastorate in 1899 to become the first secretary of the Texas Baptist Education Commission. One of the priorities of this new Commission called for enlarging the sphere of ministerial preparation at Baylor University at Waco. A new theological department was established at the school in 1901 with Carroll serving as head of the department, which had two other faculty members, including A. H. Newman, the outstanding historian from McMaster University in Canada.

¹Jeff D. Ray, *B. H. Carroll* (Nashville: The Baptist Sunday School Board of the SBC, 1927); W. W. Barnes, "Biography of B. H. Carroll," in Index of the Carroll Collection, Roberts Library, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Also, see Franklin M. Segler, "Carroll, Benajah Harvey," in *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*, ed. Norman Cox (4 vols., Nashville: Broadman, 1958), 1:232-33.

²J. B. Gambrell, "The Home Going of President Carroll," in *Dr. B. H. Carroll, the Colossus of Baptist History*, ed. J. W. Crowder (Fort Worth: self-published, 1946), 101; James T. Spivey, "Benajah Harvey Carroll, *The Legacy of Southwestern: Writings that Shaped a Tradition*, edited by James Leo Garrett Jr. (North Richland Hills, TX: Smithfield, 2002).

³Robert A. Baker, *Blossoming Desert: A Concise History of Texas Baptists* (Waco: Word, 1970), 134-52; also, L. R. Elliott, ed., *Centennial History of Texas Baptists* (Dallas: Baptist General Convention of Texas, 1936); Leon McBeth, *Texas Baptists: A Sesquicentennial History* (Dallas: Baptistway, 1998), 143-50.

Just a few years later, in 1905, Baylor's theology department was enlarged into Baylor Theological Seminary with Carroll named as dean. The faculty included Newman, Calvin Goodspeed, C. B. Williams, and L. W. Doolan. At the opening of the Baylor Seminary, Carroll set forth his vision for theological education grounded in biblical orthodoxy, which was combined with a zeal for denominational unity and cooperation. This seminary eventually separated from Baylor and was granted an inaugural charter to form a new institution on March 14, 1908, with Carroll serving as the first president. He proceeded to publish five lengthy articles in the *Baptist Standard*, articulating the distinctive mission of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, which was moved to Fort Worth in 1910, where the work was relaunched with seven faculty members and 126 students.⁴

Carroll believed his vision for the new seminary to be in continuity with Southern Seminary, where he had previously served as a trustee, though it is important to note that this vision was specifically contextualized and adapted for the southwest frontier. Carroll maintained great admiration for James P. Boyce and John A. Broadus, the first and second presidents of Southern Seminary, but Carroll's work was purposefully distinctive. The founder of Southwestern Seminary, who was 65 years old when the institution was started in 1908, died in 1914. Though he only served as president for six years, and a few of those in less than good health, he had established a seminary committed to historic orthodoxy and denominational unity, and characterized by a generous spirit of cooperation. This spirit has continued to influence Southwestern through the years, including the work of W. T. Conner and James Leo Garrett Jr.⁵

Carroll regularly taught the entirety of the English Bible in four-year cycles, both at Baylor and at Southwestern. His final lectures on the inspiration and authority of the Bible continue to serve as an important source for understanding Southern Baptist views of Scripture at the turn of the twentieth century. Unlike Conner and Garrett, Carroll, himself, was not a writing theologian. He employed

⁴Robert A. Baker, *Tell the Generations Following: A History of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1908-1983* (Nashville: Broadman, 1983), 23-109; Also, see W. K. Penrod, "A Plea for a Great Southwestern Seminary," *Baptist Standard* (October 17, 1907); B. H. Carroll, "Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary," *Baptist Standard* (November 16, 1905).

⁵Baker, *Tell the Generations Following*, 53-109.

sermons, editorials, addresses, debates, and private correspondence to communicate his theological commitments.⁶ Essentially, as James Spivey has noted, “he was an expositor and polemicist with a biblical pastoral theology who made little attempt to systematize doctrine.”⁷ Carroll’s theology can be found in sermons and lectures, but his thought reflected an overall faithfulness with the New Hampshire Confession (1834/1853).

The Bible was the focus of Carroll’s career. His widespread reputation as a champion of Baptist orthodoxy was closely associated with his doctrine of Scripture. He confessed the Bible to be the written revelation of God. The affirmation undergirded Carroll’s entire theology and exegesis of Scripture. While noting a close relationship between revelation and inspiration, he nevertheless went to great lengths to differentiate between revelation, inspiration, and illumination. Carroll clearly and enthusiastically emphasized that the inspiration of Scripture ensures a perfect standard of instruction, conviction, and a profitable work for correction and training in righteousness.⁸

While recognizing that the biblical writers were moved along by the Holy Spirit, Carroll rightly recognized that inspiration applies primarily to the writings of Scripture. He carefully developed his argument for biblical inspiration from a Baptist context, building on the affirmation of Scripture in Article One of the New Hampshire Confession. Carroll built his course for the Bible’s inspiration by piling up the Bible’s testimony about itself. He defended the inspiration of every word in Scripture almost excessively. Probably indicating his lack of formal education, he incorrectly attempted to defend the Hebrew vowel points in this process. Nevertheless, his bottom-line conclusion that the very words of the Bible were chosen by God was consistent with the work of J. L. Dagg, Basil Manly Jr., and James Boyce. Carroll rejected all forms of limited or partial inspiration, saying that “when you hear the silly talk that the Bible contains the

⁶See B. H. Carroll, *The B. H. Carroll Pulpit*, ed. Adam W. Greenway (Fort Worth, TX: Seminary Hill Press, 2021).

⁷James Spivey, “Benajah Harvey Carroll,” in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, ed. Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Nashville: B&H, 2001), 70; also, see B. H. Carroll, *Inspiration of the Bible*, ed. J. B. Cranfill (New York: Revell, 1930).

⁸Carroll, *Inspiration of the Bible*; also, see Timothy George and Richard Land, eds., *Baptist Why and Why Not Revisited* (Nashville: B&H, 1996).

Word of God and is not the Word of God, you hear a fool's talk."⁹

Because Carroll emphasized the product of inspiration, he was largely silent on the method of inspiration. He highlighted the result of inspiration, which he believed to be an infallible Bible. Carroll also affirmed the Bible to be inerrant, true, trustworthy, irrevocable, and irrefragable. Carroll applied this inerrant quality only to the original writings of the sixty-six books of the Protestant Bible.

Carroll standardized orthodoxy in the southwest region of the country. As others have observed, Carroll championed Christian truth and Baptist unity, faith, and practice whether in his roles of pastor, educator, leader, or denominational statesman. Having observed Charles Spurgeon's efforts to push back against the tides of modernism in Great Britain, the Southwestern Seminary founder seemed always ready when necessary to put on his apologist or polemicist hat to affirm biblical orthodoxy and to counter liberalism, heresy, and schism.¹⁰

Carroll affirmed the biblical doctrine of creation, including an early earth, a literal Adam and Eve, and a historical fall.¹¹ His soteriological commitments reflected a modified Calvinism, without the precision of many Reformed thinkers. He rejected double predestination, affirming the spirit of the New Hampshire Confession. Since his writings were more expositional than systematic, his views on the extent of the atonement are not clear, though he seems to have leaned in the direction of a general or universal atonement, without any form of universalism.¹² He was more concerned to refute Arminianism, Campbellite teachings, "second blessing" theology, antinomianism, and the anti-missionary approaches of hyper-Calvinism. Carroll also countered extreme Landmarkism, though he himself rejected an understanding of a universal church.¹³ He challenged the growing popularity of premillennialism. In fact, Carroll's entire theological hermeneutic was staked on a postmillennial understanding of

⁹Carroll, *Inspiration*, 20; also, see David S. Dockery, "The Crisis of Scripture in Southern Baptist Life," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 9:1 (2005): 36-53.

¹⁰See David S. Dockery, *Christian Scripture: An Evangelical Perspective on Inspiration, Authority, and Interpretation* (Nashville: B&H, 1995), 189-91; also, Dockery, *Southern Baptists Consensus and Renewal: A Biblical, Theological, and Historical Proposal* (Nashville: B&H, 2008).

¹¹B. H. Carroll, *Christian Education and Some Social Problems*, ed. J. W. Crowder (Fort Worth: self-published, 1948), 14-15.

¹²Spivey, "Carroll," 173-74.

¹³Spivey, "Carroll," 175-76.

Scripture, which provided his great zeal for missions.¹⁴

His influences were Boyce, Broadus, and Spurgeon. Yet, he also showed dependence upon and appreciation for the work of A. H. Strong and the various aspects of Landmarkism found in J. R. Graves and J. M. Pendleton. He held these tensions together by appealing for the importance of Christian unity to counter the spirit of Christian divisiveness. Carroll's commitment to the local church, to the gospel, to the importance of missions, and his unwavering conviction regarding the truthfulness of holy Scripture shaped his life, his thinking, and his work. Carroll was primarily a pastor, a preacher, a homiletical and pastoral theologian. His thought was somewhat systematized through the editorial work of J. W. Crowder and J. B. Cranfill. Carroll called for more than an articulation of the tenets of Christian doctrine; he appealed for an experiential response of obedience to theological truths.¹⁵ W. T. Conner maintained that the two ideals that shaped Carroll's life and thought were "an authoritative Bible and the reality of Christian experience."¹⁶ Theology was intended to equip and serve the church. While Carroll was surrounded by scholars like A. H. Newman and Calvin Goodspeed, it was one of his students who would take up the theological mantle and influence generations of Southwestern students over the next decades; that student was W. T. Conner.

2. *W. T. Conner.* W. T. Conner was born on January 19, 1877, in Cleveland County, Arkansas. When he was 15, his family moved to Texas where he was baptized at the Harmony Baptist Church at Caps, Texas. Conner received a B.A. and M.A. from Baylor University where he was influenced by the missionary zeal of John S. Tanner. Conner was a member of the first graduating class at Southwestern Seminary in 1908 with a Th.B. degree. At the recommendation of both Professors Newman and Goodspeed, President Carroll invited Conner to join the Southwestern faculty. While urging him to receive additional preparation, Newman and Goodspeed encouraged him to go to Rochester Seminary where he studied with A. H. Strong and Walter Rauschenbusch, among others, receiving a B.D.

¹⁴Spivey, "Carroll," 176-77; also see Tom L. Watson, "The Eschatology of B. H. Carroll" (Th.M. thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1960).

¹⁵Spivey, "Carroll," 177-79; See Michael Wade Crisp, "The Pastoral Theology of B. H. Carroll: An Examination" (Ph.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015).

¹⁶W. T. Conner, *Southwestern Evangel* (December 1925), 6.

degree in 1910. Following his graduation from Rochester and a brief period at the University of Chicago, Conner returned to teaching at Southwestern. He was later given a leave of absence in 1914 to pursue Th.D. studies with E. Y. Mullins at Southern Seminary, writing a dissertation on “Pragmatism and Theology.” He later wrote an additional thesis on the theology of John to receive his Ph.D. from Southern.¹⁷

Conner wrote important books on *Revelation and God* (1936), *Christian Doctrine* (1937), *The Faith of the New Testament* (1940), *The Gospel of Redemption* (1945), and *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (1949). His primary works were published by Broadman Press, but he also wrote for evangelical publishers like Zondervan and Revell.¹⁸ Conner carried out the role at Southwestern Seminary as primary writing theologian in a manner similar to what E. Y. Mullins had done earlier done at Southern Seminary. Conner’s most significant contribution to the subject of biblical authority is contained in his volumes *Revelation and God* and *Christian Doctrine*. During his life, the influence of Carroll and Goodspeed waned and that of Mullins and Strong increased. While Conner wrote with regular appeals to the biblical text, doing so with greater regularity than other Baptist theologians, his work was also shaped by the emphasis on experience found in Mullins’s methodology and William James’s pragmatism and empiricism.¹⁹

Conner emphasized the personal nature of revelation as well as its progressive nature. He clearly affirmed biblical inspiration, but, like Carroll, did not contend for a model of inspiration. It would not, however, be unfair to suggest that his understanding differed from Carroll’s, reflecting an approach more akin to that of Strong and Mullins. He sought to balance carefully the divine and human aspect of Scripture. He did not discuss inerrancy or infallibility though he never indicated errors in the biblical text. His approach to

¹⁷James Leo Garrett Jr., “Walter Thomas Conner,” *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, 202-07; also see Garrett, *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), 449-54; Stewart Newman, *W. T. Conner: Theologian of the Southwest* (Nashville: Broadman, 1964).

¹⁸Conner wrote *Personal Christianity* (1937) and *The Christ We Need* (1938) with Zondervan. He penned *The Epistles of John* (1929) with Revell.

¹⁹Garrett, “Conner,” 207-11; also, see David S. Dockery, “Walter Thomas Conner (1877-1952),” *The Encyclopedia of Christian Civilization*, edited by G. T. Kurian (4 vols., Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 1:615-16.

theology tended not to spend time on what he considered speculative matters like divine decrees or theories about the original autographs of Scripture. Conner affirmed the Bible's trustworthiness and its full authority, stressing the Bible's focus on the spiritual dimensions of life. His ultimate concern emphasized the function of Scripture in leading men and women toward freedom in Christ. The bottom line for Conner was the authoritative character of Scripture.²⁰

Conner expressed greater openness on the relationship of science to the Bible as he advanced in his career. In 1925, he penned a strongly worded negative review in *The Southwestern Evangel* on the work of W. L. Poteat, president of Wake Forest College and one of the first public advocates for evolution in Southern Baptist life. Both Stewart Newman and James Leo Garrett, Conner's two primary interpreters, have suggested that years after writing this review, sometime later in his career, Conner had a growing openness to theistic evolution, similar to the thought of A. H. Strong.²¹

While Conner relegated discussions regarding theories of inspiration to theological obscurity, he confessed the Bible's authority for faith, life, and practice, stressing redemption as the Bible's central interest and the person and work of Jesus Christ as the hermeneutical key to its unity. He emphasized the Bible's divine origin and absolute authority in all matters. Conner gladly confessed his commitment to scriptural authority, the Holy Trinity, the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, Christ's redemptive death and his victorious resurrection, salvation by grace through faith, the church, the importance of the kingdom, and the return of Christ.²² Affirming historical orthodoxy in these major doctrines, it must be noted that his methodology and emphasis on Christian experience together with his hesitancy to affirm biblical infallibility set a trajectory somewhat different from Carroll and Goodspeed. In fact, he thought Carroll to be too rigid and inflexible, reflecting elements of medieval scholasticism.²³

²⁰Helpful interpreters of Conner's understanding of Scripture include James Leo Garrett Jr., "Theology of Walter Thomas Conner" (Th. D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1954). Also, see L. Russ Bush III and Tom J. Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible* (Chicago: Moody, 1980) and Dwight A. Moody, "The Bible," in *Has Our Theology Changed?* ed. Paul A. Basden (Nashville: B&H, 1994), 7-40.

²¹Dockery, *Christian Scripture*, 196-97; Newman, *Conner*, 104-38.

²²See W. T. Conner, *Christian Doctrine* (Nashville: Broadman, 1937).

²³See William H. Brackney, *A Genetic History of the Baptists* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2004), 420-29; see Conner's review of *Fundamentals of Christianity*, by F. C. Patton in *The*

Still, there is much to appreciate in the work of W. T. Conner. Though not well known or influential beyond the world of Southern Baptists, Conner's impact on Southwestern Seminary and Southern Baptists remains significant. Like B. H. Carroll, Conner believed theology should serve the church and strengthen the Christian experience of believers. His work was grounded in Scripture, generally seeking to avoid speculative interpretations. As others have noted, if Carroll can be called a pastoral/homiletical theologian, it would be appropriate to think of Conner as a biblical theologian. His writing style was clear and understandable, though not simplistic. His emphasis on Christology, the doctrine of revelation, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, sanctification and the Christian life, and his understanding of the church as both local and universal were important and commendable contributions.²⁴

His approach to the attributes of God and his emphasis on God's holiness demonstrated thoughtful reflection, leading him to consider the worship of God as the highest calling for the church and individual believers.²⁵ Like Carroll, he worked from a broadly Reformed framework regarding soteriology, affirming both unconditional election and the perseverance of the saints.²⁶ Conner, like Carroll, rejected federal headship in thinking about the sinfulness of humans. He stressed the universal intent of Christ's provision, stressing God's purpose in salvation rather than speculation about the divine decrees.²⁷ As previously noted, his work on sanctification remains worthy of commendation, but his approach to justification was rather problematic in the way he blurred justification and regeneration.²⁸

Conner's theology was certainly more systematic than Carroll's,

Southwestern Evangel 10 (May 1926): 45.

²⁴Garrett, "Conner," 211-12.

²⁵Garrett, "Conner," 209; also see W. T. Conner, *Revelation and God* (Nashville: Broadman, 1936).

²⁶Garrett, "Conner," 209-10; also, see Paul A. Basden, "Theologies of Predestination in the Southern Baptist Tradition: A Critical Evaluation" (Ph.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1986), 208-29; Thomas J. Nettles, *By His Grace and For His Glory* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986).

²⁷See Walter D. Draughon III, "A Critical Evaluation of the Diminishing Influence of Calvinism on the Doctrine of the Atonement in Representative Southern Baptist Theologians: James Petigru Boyce, Edgar Young Mullins, Walter Thomas Conner, and Dale Moody" (Ph.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1987).

²⁸See Robert Keith Parks, "A Biblical Evaluation of the Doctrine of Justification in Recent American Baptist Theology: With Special Reference to A. H. Strong, E. Y. Mullins, and W. T. Conner" (Th.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1954), 147-89.

but still idiosyncratic at times, especially in the order with which he treated theological topics and themes.²⁹ He rejected dispensationalism while moving away from his former postmillennial position toward amillennialism with an emphasis on Jesus and the kingdom. Conner emphasized the redemptive work of Christ, preferring to frame the cross work of Christ in terms of *Christus Victor*. While tensions played out across the country in the 1920s and 1930s with the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, Conner carefully distanced himself from both fundamentalism and liberalism, carrying forward the basic commitments to historical orthodoxy.³⁰

The influence of E. Y. Mullins on Conner, as well as that of A. H. Strong, cannot be missed. Conner, like Mullins, emphasized the role of experience and Christian devotion, which represented the best of pietism as well as some weaknesses from the legacy of F. D. E. Schleiermacher. Like Strong, he grappled with the relational, historiographical, philosophical, and theological challenges brought on by modernity while seeking to maintain and defend the primary tenets of historical orthodoxy.³¹ Conner's warm-hearted devotion to the gospel and to the importance of global missions, which can be traced back to the influence of Professor Tanner during his college days at Baylor, helped him to maintain the balance needed as the primary writing theologian among Southern Baptists in the 1930s and 1940s.³² Several of Conner's students carried forth his influence on the mission field, in the local church, and in denominational settings, but none did so more than James Leo Garrett Jr. in the realm of theological education.

II. JAMES LEO GARRETT JR: BAPTIST AND EVANGELICAL THEOLOGIAN

Born on November 25, 1925, in the shadow of Baylor University, Garrett was called heavenward on February 5, 2020, at the age of 94. Garrett's lofty status as a distinguished theologian emeritus continued

²⁹For example, Conner almost always treated the doctrine of Christ prior to theology proper.

³⁰Garrett, "Conner," 207-12; also see the chapter on Conner in *Baptist Roots: A Reader in the Theology of Christian People*, ed. Curtis W. Freeman, James W. McClendon, and C. Rosalee Velloso DaSilva (Valley Forge: Judson, 1999).

³¹See Grant Wacker, *Augustus Hopkins Strong and the Dilemma of Historical Consciousness* (Macon: GA: Mercer University Press, 1985).

³²Personal conversations with both Darold Morgan and James Leo Garrett Jr., who studied with Conner in the final years of his long tenure at Southwestern.

to influence Southwestern Seminary, as well as Southern Baptist and evangelical life well beyond his days as an active faculty member at Southwestern. Garrett graduated from Baylor University in 1945, from Southwestern Seminary in 1948, from Princeton Seminary in 1949, and from Southwestern Seminary with a Th.D. in 1954, after completing a dissertation on his mentor, W. T. Conner, who died in 1952. Garrett went on to complete a Ph.D. at Harvard in 1966 under the supervision of George Hunston Williams.

Garrett taught systematic and historical theology at Southwestern from 1949-59, where he also briefly served as editor of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology*. From 1959-73, he held a faculty position in historical and Christian theology at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He served as director of the J. M. Dawson Institute on Church and State as well as professor at Baylor University from 1973-79. He returned to his beloved Southwestern in the 1979-80 academic year to resume his role as professor of systematic and historical theology.³³

Garrett's reputation as a scholar and lecturer was indeed well deserved. He had written widely and was recognized as the premier Southern Baptist theologian of the second half of the twentieth century. Garrett had a rapid-fire method of lecturing that made it difficult to keep up with his pace. His grasp of church history, historical theology, and systematic theology seemed encyclopedic. He pushed students hard; his exams were extremely challenging, and his standards exacting.³⁴

While Garrett was a scholar of the first order, he also was a man of deep and genuine piety, kind and considerate toward others, a devoted churchman, and a faithful follower of Christ. He loved the gospel message and exemplified a confidence in the Scriptures, which he believed to be totally dependable, reliable, truthful, trustworthy, and infallible. Garrett modeled what it meant to be an ecclesial theologian, one who understood that his first calling was to serve the church. In this sense, he followed well his teacher, W. T. Conner. If Conner shaped theology at Southwestern in the first half

³³See Malcolm B. Yarnell III, "James Leo Garrett Jr.," *Profiles of Faithfulness*, edited by Alex Sibley (Fort Worth: Seminary Hill Press, 2021), 177-84; Brackney, *Genetic History of Baptist Thought*, 425; also, see Paul A. Basden, "James Leo Garrett Jr.," *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, 297-98; Basden, "James Leo Garrett Jr.," *The Legacy of Southwestern*, 133-48.

³⁴I had the privilege to study with Dr. Garrett when I was a student at Southwestern (1979-81).

of the twentieth century, Garrett did so in the second half. Indeed, one cannot understand the history and heritage of Southwestern Seminary, and the seminary's theological tradition, without grasping the significance of the Conner-Garrett tradition.

A committed Baptist, Garrett not only completed a splendid two-volume systematic theology in 1995, but also authored a massive work on *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* in 2009, which is the finest source on the history of Baptist thought ever published. It should be noted that Garrett provided significant treatment on at least 100 Baptist theologians over this 400-year period but did not treat Carroll as a theologian. Instead, he merely discussed Carroll's differences with the Baptist anti-missionary movement and his views on Landmarkism.³⁵ While a Baptist by both upbringing and conviction, Garrett led the way in showing others how to engage those in different traditions, doing so with conviction and charity. He served as the Southern Baptist representative at the Second Vatican Council. Throughout his career, Garrett continued dialogue with Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and other Protestants.³⁶

The longtime Southwestern professor maintained an infectious commitment to and hope for the unity of the people of God. In this sense he was not only an evangelical Baptist, but a convictional, denominational, and ecumenical evangelical. Garrett pushed back against the effects of Landmarkism on Southern Baptists, exemplifying the spirit of unity presented in John 17 and Ephesians 4, especially in his labors with the Baptist World Alliance. Garrett deepened his thoughts about what it meant to be a denominational evangelical in an expanded conversation with Southern Seminary historian E. Glenn Hinson called *Are Southern Baptists Evangelicals?*³⁷

In all these ways, Garrett both extended and expanded the work of others who had shaped the Southwestern theological tradition, including not only Carroll and Conner, but also Calvin Goodspeed, Ray Summers, Curtis Vaughan, John Newport, William Hendricks,

³⁵Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 206.

³⁶William Pitts, "The Relation of Baptists to Other Churches," *The People of God: Essays on the Believers' Church*, ed. Paul A. Basden and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 235-50.

³⁷James Leo Garrett Jr., E. Glenn Hinson, and James E. Tull, *Are Southern Baptists "Evangelicals"?* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983); James Leo Garrett Jr., "Are Southern Baptists 'Evangelicals'? A Further Reflection," *Southern Baptists and American Evangelicals: The Conversation Continues*, ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville: B&H, 1993), 218-23.

John Kiwiet, Bert Dominy, and Boyd Hunt, among others. His appreciation for the larger world in which Baptists live and serve was particularly notable. In 1965, he authored a work on *Baptists and Roman Catholicism*, a survey and interaction of two centuries of Baptist engagement with Roman Catholics.³⁸ Garrett encouraged further dialogue which took place under the umbrella of the Home Mission Board. Garrett suggested that Baptists could learn to talk with other Baptists and other Protestants, moving them out of their provincial and ingrained world, by dialogue with Roman Catholics. His important 1974 publication, *Baptist Relations with Other Christians*, provided a detailed overview of how Baptists around the world engage with other Christian bodies. In his conclusion, he encouraged greater cooperation in areas of evangelism, missions, education, and publication, which prepared the way for others to participate in broader conversations and shared efforts of collaboration and cobelligerency. Garrett's courage, initiative, and example in this regard was commendable at every level.³⁹

It is Garrett's prolific contribution as historical/systematic theologian that is most noteworthy. The two-volume, fifteen-hundred-page systematic theology surpassed A. H. Strong in quality and comprehensiveness. The volumes reflect an encyclopedic understanding of the issues in every area of theology.⁴⁰ William Brackney maintained that Garrett's unique contributions included defining theology as a ministry-oriented discipline whose aspects include those that are fixed and those that reflect change.⁴¹

Garrett's theological method includes locating and correlating Old and New Testament texts together with significant input from the patristic period to the modern context, asserting that the tasks of theology are instructional, apologetic, polemical, ethical, and missionary. While engaging more broadly with theologians across

³⁸James Leo Garrett Jr., *Baptists and Roman Catholicism* (Nashville: Broadman, 1965); James Leo Garrett Jr., "Protestant Writings on Roman Catholicism in the United States between Vatican Council I and Vatican Council II" (2 vols., Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard Divinity School, 1966).

³⁹James Leo Garrett Jr., ed., *Baptist Relations with Other Christians* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1974); also, see Ryan Fields, "Locating Catholicity: A Free Church Theological Account of the Church's Universality in Dialogue with the Anglican Tradition" (Ph.D. dissertation, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2021).

⁴⁰James Leo Garrett Jr., *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical* (2 vols; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990-95).

⁴¹See Brackney, *Genetic History of Baptist Thought*, 425-29, 503-10.

various traditions, one of Garrett's primary concerns was to help his readers understand who Baptists are and what they believe. As Paul Basden noted, this effort included discovering, uncovering, and recovering basic Baptist distinctives, those beliefs and practices which form the core of Baptist identity. In doing so, he first stressed how Baptists share and affirm similar beliefs with other faithful Christian traditions in the areas of biblical authority, the Trinity, creation and providence, humanity and sin, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, redemption, and last things.⁴² Then he proceeded to point out Baptist distinctives such as believer's baptism by immersion, congregational polity, religious liberty, approaches to church and state, and the responsibility for missions and evangelism. While believing there still exists a reason for Baptist Christians, Garrett stressed that Baptists were only one part of the larger body of Christ, an important aspect of the universal church, one of the places of major theological development from Carroll to Conner to Garrett.⁴³ These reflections also led him to consider the place of Southern Baptists in the larger Baptist family as well as the Believers' church tradition. He led a key conference to explore these important relationships in Louisville, Kentucky, in June of 1967.⁴⁴ Garrett carried out the theological task as a confessional Baptist and as an evangelical while heartily affirming the church as one holy catholic and apostolic.

Garrett, more so than Carroll or Conner, was a systematician, but he excelled as a historical theologian. He sought to be as exhaustive as possible to help his readers understand the various positions on almost every issue. He treasured the authority of Scripture, maintaining it to be supreme in comparison to tradition, reason, experience, or any other proposed source of authority.⁴⁵ His treatment of the Trinity is thorough and classical, affirming God's oneness and threeness in a manner faithful to the early church councils from Nicaea to Chalcedon. Garrett affirms general revelation but rejects natural theology. He affirmed God as creator, rejecting evolutionary naturalism as well as what is sometimes called creation science.⁴⁶

Garrett was at his best defending the virgin birth of Christ and

⁴²See Basden, "Garrett," in *Theologians*, 299–316.

⁴³Basden, "Garrett," in *Theologians*, 299–300.

⁴⁴Pitts, "The Relation of Baptists to Other Churches," 236–37.

⁴⁵Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, 1:155–82.

⁴⁶Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, 1:291–319.

Christology in general, again affirming Chalcedonian conclusions.⁴⁷ As Jason Duesing has pointed out in a presentation for the Center for Theological Research, Garrett's treatment given to the Holy Spirit is thorough, giving careful attention to spiritual gifts.⁴⁸ Like Carroll and Conner, Garrett presented his soteriology in a modified Reformed framework. His conclusions were nuanced, maintaining God's sovereign authority and human responsibility. Affirming both individual and corporate election, Garrett emphasized the corporate aspect, reminding his readers that God is saving a people for himself.⁴⁹

Contrary to Conner, he maintained a traditional understanding of the doctrine of justification, contending that men and women are declared righteous by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Following Millard Erickson, he opted for a universal understanding of the work of Christ while affirming both *Christus Victor* and substitutionary atonement. He clearly dismissed any notion of universalism and, also, rejected annihilationism. Garrett maintained the reality of hell as eternal punishment and the hope of heaven as the complete manifestation of God's glory. Like Conner and Carroll, Garrett rejected dispensational premillennialism.⁵⁰ He offered an extensive treatment of the doctrine of the church, refuting Landmarkism and rejecting hierarchical forms of church government. He viewed the church as a redeemed community, a gospel herald, a suffering servant, as well an organism and an organized institution. To no one's surprise, he clearly articulated Baptist beliefs regarding ecclesiology.⁵¹

Garrett's work is comprehensive in its scope, but sometimes lacking in reaching conclusions regarding disputed areas of theology. He

⁴⁷Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, 1:620-25; James Leo Garrett Jr., "A Reappraisal of Chalcedon," *Review and Expositor* 71 (1974): 31-47; Garrett, "Why Systematic Theology," *Criswell Theological Review* 3 (1989): 259-81.

⁴⁸Jason Duesing shared privately with me a copy of an insightful work he presented in 2006 for the Center for Theological Research at Southwestern Seminary with the title "Power in the Seminary: 20th Century Pneumatological Differences at Southwestern Seminary." In this paper, Duesing thoughtfully traces the theological development in the thought of Carroll, Conner, and Garrett regarding the person and work of the Holy Spirit, with important implications for other aspects of their theological commitments, which I have found helpful, adapting aspects of Duesing's insights for the overall work on this article.

⁴⁹Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, 2:432-54; also see James Leo Garrett Jr. "Should Southern Baptists Adopt the Synod of Dordt?" *Baptists Today* (26 June 1997), 18-19; David S. Dockery, "Southern Baptists and Calvinism: A Historical Look," *Calvinism: A Southern Baptist Dialogue*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen and Brad Waggoner (Nashville: B&H, 2008), 29-46.

⁵⁰Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, 2:705-69.

⁵¹Basden, "Garrett," in *Theologians*, 291-304.

carries forward more aspects of Conner than Carroll, while continuing and extending the Southwestern trajectory in a laudatory manner. The subtitle of the two-volume systematic theology, “biblical, historical, and evangelical,” should probably more accurately be stated as “biblical, historical, Baptist, and evangelical.” Some may question the value of Garrett’s encyclopedic work, but as Basden has observed, “if his purpose is to lead evangelicals, especially Baptists, to understand the length and breadth and height and depth of Christian doctrine as it has been formulated for two millennia, then he succeeds beautifully.”⁵² His purpose in his writings, as was the case in his classroom, was to bring illumination to controversy, to be convictional when needing to defend cardinal doctrines, and to avoid agitation with fellow believers with whom he differed. In doing so, he brought together his commitments to confession theology, a hopeful catholicity, and Christian unity.⁵³

III. CONCLUSION: CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY IN THE SOUTHWESTERN TRADITION

In sum, there is both continuity and discontinuity in the work of these three important shapers of the Southwestern theological tradition. Carroll was primarily a preacher and denominational leader, not a writing theologian or a systematician. Conner wrote for Baptists and did so in a most effective way as the most widely read Baptist theologian for almost a quarter of a century. His work was biblical and focused, more engaging than Carroll. As the years passed, Conner clearly echoed more the influence of Strong and Mullins rather than Carroll or Goodspeed. Garrett’s work was clearly more comprehensive, but there is a sense in which Conner’s influence was always present in the background. Garrett’s engagement was far broader than either of his predecessors, avoiding any narrow provincialism or parochialism.

Carroll affirmed and defended biblical inerrancy. Conner emphasized biblical authority. Garrett offered balance, joining Conner with an important articulation of the divine-human authorship of Scripture. All three were unquestionably confessional and orthodox

⁵²Basden, “Garrett,” in *Theologians*, 315.

⁵³See David S. Dockery, “Introduction: Southern Baptists in the Twenty-First Century,” *Southern Baptist Identity: An Evangelical Denomination Faces the Future* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2009), 13-22.

regarding the primary matters of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and salvation by grace through faith. All affirmed God as creator, while only Carroll maintained a young earth view. Conner became more open to theistic evolution in his latter years, while Garrett preferred a revelatory day theory similar to Bernard Ramm.

Carroll rejected an understanding of the universal church, which was corrected by Conner and expanded and emphasized by Garrett. Carroll reflected Landmarkist tendencies not found in Conner or Garrett. Carroll worked from a more consistent Calvinistic framework, though none of the three affirmed double predestination nor emphasized particular redemption. Conner affirmed unconditional election while rejecting irresistible grace. Garrett gave greater emphasis to the corporate nature of election. While all worked from a broadly Reformed framework, there was a diminishing influence of consistent Calvinism with Conner and Garrett. Conner, more so than either Carroll or Garrett, emphasized personal revelation and experience.

All three rejected dispensationalism, while Carroll not only affirmed postmillennialism, but used it as a hermeneutical guide for how he read Scripture.⁵⁴ Conner moved from postmillennialism to amillennialism. Garrett recognized and articulated the difficulties in interpreting Revelation 20:1-10. All affirmed the promise of heaven, the reality of hell, and the essential work of gospel proclamation, evangelism, and missions. All saw theology's purpose in light of serving the church, strengthening believers, and advancing the gospel.

Carroll's primary focus was on Baptist matters. Conner, likewise, broadly emphasized Baptist doctrine while engaging the neo-orthodox thinkers of his day and rejecting the liberalism he discovered at the University of Chicago. Garrett maintained a distinctively Baptist and thoroughly comprehensive theology that could be described as biblical, historical, convictionally ecumenical, and denominationally evangelical, emphasizing informed engagement and relations with other Christians while drawing from the best of the Christian theological tradition in every era of the church.

The good news today is that as liberal denominations have lost their theological compass and as progressive evangelicals flirt with the remnants of Walter Rauschenbusch, Baptist evangelicals and

⁵⁴Spivey, "Carroll," 176-77.

evangelical Baptists can find in Carroll, Conner, and especially Garrett an unflinching commitment to confessional Christianity, to the truthfulness of Scripture, the transformational power of the gospel, the importance of the church, and the essentials of historical orthodoxy.

James Leo Garrett's major contributions are his efforts to extend the best of the Christian tradition in his work as both historical and systematic theologian. The clear and consistent methodology, the breadth of his historical understanding, and genuinely charitable spirit, all of which are informed and shaped by his desire for the unity of the church, underscore his work from beginning to end. Overall, his work is biblical, historical, Baptist, and evangelical. His work demonstrates an awareness of contemporary trends and issues while being fully aware of the centuries of theologizing throughout the history of the church, doing so while remaining anchored in historical orthodoxy.

The strengths of Garrett's work are many and the weaknesses are few. His work is more encompassing than almost any other Baptist work of systematic theology. His work is certainly less trendy than Clark Pinnock or Stan Grenz, and less philosophical and journalistic than Carl Henry. Garrett's approach is less defensive and ingrown than J. L. Dagg, James Boyce, or Carroll. It is more comprehensive than James McClendon and more encyclopedic than Millard Erickson, though not as readable or as engaging with contemporary theological, cultural, and ethical issues and trends. Garrett's contribution is more interactive with the great thinkers throughout the centuries than Bruce Demarest or Gordon Lewis, though less pedagogically friendly than Wayne Grudem. His thoughtful catholicity is more nuanced than either Curtis Freeman or Steve Harmon.

Without question, Garrett's work is unapologetically Baptist, demonstrating greater competency, breadth, and depth than Carroll, Conner, Mullins, Dale Moody, Morris Ashcraft, or Fisher Humphreys. The overall significance of his work is greater than that of the influential A. H. Strong. The sum of Garrett's work from his dissertation on Conner in 1954 to his massive study of Baptist theology in 2009 is nothing less than a first-rate achievement. Together with Millard Erickson, James Leo Garrett has provided a standard to which the rest of us should aspire. Contemporary Baptist

theologians such as Albert Mohler, Malcolm Yarnell, Gregg Allison, Stephen Wellum, Danny Akin, Chris Morgan, Adam Harwood, Rhyne Putman, Matt Emerson, Jason Duesing, Nathan Finn, Bob Stewart, Peter Tie, Madison Grace, Matthew Barrett, John Hammett, Dongsun Cho, Juan Sánchez, among others, will be able to build upon this important work, standing on Garrett's shoulders to serve the church faithfully in the twenty-first century. Let us together offer our gratitude to God for the gift of one of his most gifted teachers to his church and to the life and legacy of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, James Leo Garrett Jr.



CURRENTS, METHODS, AND TENDENCIES IN THE COLLECTED WRITINGS OF JAMES LEO GARRETT JR., 1950–2015

Wyman Lewis Richardson*

Perhaps the most common complaint leveled against James Leo Garrett Jr.'s two-volume *Systematic Theology* is that, having provided copious and encyclopedic citations of the views of others, Garrett is too reticent in providing his own. Indicative would be David Smith's 1991 review of volume 1 in *Didaskalia*. There, Smith, while deeply appreciative of the volume, notes that "Garrett frequently leaves one guessing where he stands on an issue, but seldom sure," and later conjectures, with a seemingly sincere desire to understand Garrett's approach, that "some readers may prefer not to be bothered by an author's own conclusions."¹ John Moe's review of volume 2 in *Logia* makes similar observations. Moe, less appreciative than Smith, writes that Garrett is "careful not to be dogmatic" to the point that the work often lacks "a clear indication of which the author considers to be correct." Moe observes that Garrett's "conclusions are as tentative as it is possible to make them."² William Hendricks found Garrett's conclusions in volume 1 "well thought through" but nonetheless "sparse."³ Again and again this recognition is made by reviewers—either as a complaint or as an acknowledgment with varying degrees of sympathy.

Paul Jensen, reviewing volume 2 in *The Reformed Theological Review*, chafes perhaps most intensely of all published reviewers under the insufficient presence of Garrett's own views. He writes:

¹David Smith, "Review, *Systematic Theology* (Vol. 1)," *Didaskalia* 2, no. 2 (April 1991): 35.

²John Moe, "Review: *Systematic Theology* (Vol. 2)," *Logia* 7, no. 2, (1998): 63.

³William Hendricks, "Review: *Systematic Theology* (Vol. 1)," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 33, no. 3 (Summer 1991): 42.

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Is all this unfair to Garrett? Possibly. But I would love him to restrict himself to two hundred pages, and tell us, with passion, and in the light of all that learning, what he believes, and how it all hangs together.⁴

Here one detects not only frustration at the lack of Garrett's views, but also at what Jenson perceives to be a lack of engaging tone and personal investment in Garrett's *Systematic*. Jenson "would love" for Garrett to tell us what he thinks "with passion."

While I do not fully agree with these criticisms and believe that, to an extent, they represent a misunderstanding of what Garrett was seeking to do in his *Systematic*, *they are not utterly devoid of merit. Regardless, the fact that the vast majority of published reviews of the Systematic* articulate some expression of curiosity at the absence of Garrett's own personality from his major work should be noted.

It is at this point that the availability and study of Garrett's collected writings can offer a helpful nuance and compliment to his major works. One benefit of having Garrett's shorter writings collected and arranged first topically and then chronologically is that the reader and researcher will be allowed more easily to observe currents, methods, and tendencies in Garrett's approach as a theologian, educator, churchman, and writer. Garrett's collected writings consist of articles (journal, magazine, and news), essays, sermons, a pamphlet, booklets, lectures, book chapters, interview transcripts, and a hymn, roughly spanning the sixty-five years from 1950 to 2015. With few exceptions, when I refer to Garrett's "collected writings" I am referring to those pieces that will comprise, when finished, the eight volumes of *The Collected Writings of James Leo Garrett Jr., 1950-2015*. These works, again, with very few exceptions, were arranged with Garrett's agreement, cooperation, and assistance, and, until his death, he was still finding and recommending the inclusion of previously forgotten pieces. By "collected writings" I refer to the Garrett corpus outside of his major works: the two-volume *Systematic Theology* and his *Baptist Theology*.

I hope to demonstrate that Garrett's collected writings, while bearing, of course, the marks of Garrett's approach in the major

⁴Paul Jenson, "Review: *Systematic Theology* (Vol. 2)," *The Reformed Theological Review* 55, no. 3 (September-December 1996): 155-56.

works for which he is best known, not only occasionally reveal some qualities, attributes, and tendencies not always overtly present in the major works, but also provide the reader with a picture of Garrett's maturation and evolution as a writer and scholar that will enrich the reader's engagement with the major works. What is more, the collected shorter writings show us more of Garrett himself and, indeed, more of the "passion" that Jensen regretted missing in the *Systematic*.

I. METHOD

1. *Writing for All*. One aspect of Garrett's method that the collected writings make clear is his penchant for addressing many of the topics and issues he addressed in both scholarly and popular venues. In his preface to volume 2 of *The Collected Writings*, Garrett speaks of his intentionality in this regard:

First, I have tried to write both for the broad readership of Southern Baptist church members and for pastors and teachers who pursue questions intensively. My earliest writing was for Baptist state papers, wherein I tried to communicate with the rank-and-file of Southern Baptists. My professors Drs. W. T. Conner and T. B. Maston excelled in such communication, and I sought to learn from them.⁵

One cannot help but feel that this life-long refusal to retreat exclusively into scholarly journals and monographs was fueled in large part by Garrett's high view of and deep involvement with the local church and the people of it as well with seminary students and pastors.

2. *Thoroughness*. Many of the qualities one finds in the collected writings are evident throughout all of his works, collected and major. For instance, the collected writings evidence the same degree of thoroughness for which Garrett is known in the major works. The eight volumes of these writings, for instance, contain approximately fifty-six-hundred footnotes, many of them quite extensive, across one-hundred-and-sixty-three chapters. This penchant for meticulous

⁵James Leo Garrett Jr., "Preface," in *The Collected Writings of James Leo Garrett Jr., 1950-2015*, [with the final three volumes forthcoming], ed. Wyman Lewis Richardson, Rick Willis, and Michael F. Kennedy (5 vols.; Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2018-2022), 2:xiii.

attribution was either appreciated or it was not, as two reactions to Garrett's extensive defense of congregational polity in *Perspectives on Church Government: Five Views on Church Polity*, demonstrate. In response to Garrett's thirty-seven-page chapter and its three-hundred-and-seventeen footnotes, many of them containing several lines, Danny Akin summarized the chapter as "classic James Leo" and asserted that "the bibliography above justifies the value of the chapter." Less enthused was Paul Zahl:

The weakness of the piece lies in its format. There are just too many footnotes... What is weak about the text is its undigested scholarly apparatus, which floods the reader with lists of commentaries and resources rather than digesting and integrating them.⁶

This thoroughness extends somewhat famously, we might say, to Garrett's penchant for providing middle names and birth/death dates for most of the figures he cites and references. This is evident in the collected writings.

This commitment in relation to sources occasionally assisted him in confrontation and made him a formidable debater. For instance, in a September 8, 1960, edition of *The Voice of St. Matthews and The Voice of the Highlands*, a newspaper in St. Matthews, Kentucky, a letter appeared from young Professor Garrett expressing concern about two statements that were made by Father Roger Bartman in his message at St. Margaret Mary, which had been reported on in the August 4, 1960, edition of the paper by the editor, Emil M. Aun, who was present when Father Bartman spoke. Garrett objected to two of Bartman's reported statements: (1) "that of the original American colonies, only Maryland...did not have an Established Church"; and (2) that "not a single Catholic country anywhere in the world...demands that its chief executive be a Catholic."

These two points, Garrett said, "are clearly contradicted by the facts of history and contemporary world government." He then proceeded to argue that it was "well known" that the first statement was

⁶Daniel Akin, "Response by Daniel L. Akin," in *Perspectives on Church Government*, ed. Chad Owen Brand and R. Stanton Norman (Nashville: B&H, 2004), 195; Zahl, "Response by Paul F. M. Zahl," in *Perspectives on Church Government*, ed. Chad Owen Brand and R. Stanton Norman (Nashville: B&H, 2004), 207.

false and that such could be “readily demonstrated.” Garrett appealed to Anson Stokes’s three-volume *Church and State in the United States* and documented that Rhode Island had no established church and that, technically, neither did Pennsylvania. To the second point, Garrett used Amos Peaslee’s three-volume *Constitutions of Nations* to show that, in point of fact, Bartman was, once again, “quite incorrect,” and documented that Spain, Argentina, and Paraguay “all require that their chief executives be Roman Catholics.”

Finally, Garrett gently scolded Bartman and called for precision and accuracy in one’s research:

“While citizens do differ in their beliefs and opinions, there are certain facts of history that call for precise and accurate interpretation by any who would speak or write authoritatively about them. I trust that you and Professor Bartman will take notice of these erroneous statements and will hasten to make a statement of correction for the benefit of all your readers.”⁷

Garrett likewise utilized his well-known thoroughness and accuracy with sources in his most well-known debate, an encounter with Glenn Hinson. In the exchange, Garrett alleged that Hinson’s failure to differentiate between and define “voluntarism” and “voluntaryism” leads to confusion as does his less than convincing equation of “voluntarism,” as he defines it, with E. Y. Mullins’s soul competency. Garrett goes on to pronounce Hinson’s reckoning of E. Y. Mullins as “the supreme Baptist theologian” to be “unsafe, if not dangerous” in that it allows “one Baptist theologian...to speak for all Baptists.” Shortly thereafter Garrett observes that Mullins, “in the very paragraph in which he defined his concept of soul competency” declared Baptists to be “in substantial agreement with the evangelical world in general.” This was a somewhat poignant and, if I may, devastating move on Garrett’s part, as it served the two purposes of (a) reminding the reader again of how Mullins’s understanding of soul competency differed from Hinson’s and (b) highlighting how Mullins likewise disagreed with Hinson’s thesis on Southern Baptists and Evangelicals.

⁷Garrett, “Letter to Editor (1960),” *The Voice of St. Matthews and The Voice of the Highlands* (September 8, 1960): 4.

Even with these pointed offensives in debate, we still find Garrett's customary irenicism and even-handedness. Garrett clearly respected Hinson, for example, who was a friend and colleague, and expressed that their debate was "a fraternal one" and that Garrett "accepted my assignment to prepare a reply or rebuttal to my friend and long-time colleague" with "some reluctance." What is more, he hoped that he has conducted himself "in a spirit of humility and love."⁸

A perusal of the collected writings will confirm the validity and rightness of Malcolm Yarnell entitling his February 2020 Southwestern Seminary chapel address on Garrett, "Blessed are the Gentle: The Legacy of James Leo Garrett Jr." One fails to find anything like *ad hominem* arguments in Garrett's writings. On the contrary, Garrett's concern for treating others fairly and rightly has been encapsulated in a formula that has been called the "James Leo Garrett Rule." Bart Barber attempted to call Twitter to the "James Leo Garrett Rule" in 2019, and he summarized the rule thus: "Only when you can state your opponent's position so well that they themselves say, 'Yes, that's what I believe,' can you then begin to debate."⁹ The clearest articulation of the "James Leo Garrett Rule" from the pen of Garrett can be found in his 2005 "Baptist Identity and Christian Unity," when Garrett wrote: "In all interconfessional dialogues in which I have been privileged to participate, I have sought to maintain two standards: first, to represent the beliefs of Baptists accurately, faithfully, and representatively, and second, to attempt to state the positions of others in terms the accuracy of which others would readily affirm."¹⁰ Here we find in the collected writings Garrett's call for irenicism and precision and care alongside his demonstration of these same qualities.

3. *Balance.* The judiciousness and balance rightly hailed in Garrett's major works is abundantly evident in the collected writings as well. Garrett shows time and time again in the collected writings a concern that extremes be avoided. Oftentimes, he utilizes the image of

⁸James Leo Garrett Jr., "A Response to Professor Hinson," in *Are Southern Baptists "Evangelicals"?*, James Leo Garrett Jr., E. Glenn Hinson, and James E. Tull (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983), 195.

⁹It should be noted that Twitter appears *not* to have heeded Barber's call. See Bart Barber, @bart-barber, "Only when you can state your opponent's position so well," Twitter, September 26, 2019, 6:45 a.m., <https://twitter.com/bartbarber/status/1177187496200953857>.

¹⁰Garrett, "Baptist Identity and Christian Unity," 2:252.

the pendulum to accomplish this. For instance, in his 1997 “Should Southern Baptists Adopt the Synod of Dort?” he employs the image as a summary and cautionary statement of the frequent imbalances one finds throughout Christian history.

Indeed we need to recognize that the extreme swing of the pendulum in Christian history has often meant the road to heresy, and the balance has often been the cry of orthodoxy. In the person of Jesus Christ, his deity and his humanity need to be balanced. In the Holy Scriptures, the word of God and the word of man need to be balanced. So also in the intricate interconnectedness of God’s sovereign authority, agency, and power and our human responsibility and accountability, there needs to be balance.¹¹

Garrett seems especially concerned with balance in his calls for a return to regenerate church membership and church discipline. In 1961, he wondered aloud whether or not “Baptist churches that have abandoned the negative aspects of congregational discipline” can “restore the same without some of the abuses of the past.”¹² In his 1962 call for the recovery of church discipline in Baptist churches, Garrett sees the possibility of imbalance in the direction of “a new Pharisaic legalism” as “probably the greatest problem” and calls for care in its reinstatement.¹³

On another front, in 1995 we find Garrett responding to Robert C. Campbell in Baptist World Alliance conversations between Baptists and Pentecostals/Charismatics and calling upon Baptists to “deal with the lists [of gifts of the Holy Spirit] in a balanced and comprehensive manner.”¹⁴

Perhaps one of Garrett’s most striking examples of his commitment to balance and the avoidance of extremes can be found in his important 1972 article, “Biblical Infallibility and Inerrancy According to Baptist Confessions.” After surveying numerous confessions, Garrett

¹¹Garrett, “Should Southern Baptists Adopt the Synod of Dort?” 2:190.

¹²Garrett, “Seeking a Regenerate Church Membership,” 3:144.

¹³Garrett, *Baptist Church Discipline*, 3:177.

¹⁴Garrett, “Baptists and the Pentecostal/Charismatic Movements,” 2:241.

carefully concludes:

This distinction in historic usage suggests that we can and ought to differentiate a functional infallibility (the Bible's role as the supreme rule of faith) from a modal infallibility (the inspiration of words as well as thoughts by a method akin to dictation by the Holy Spirit, with a consequent de-emphasis on the freedom and responsibility of the human authors and a rejection of biblical criticism except for textual criticism).

His carefully worded proposal concerning the utilization of these terms by Baptists shows a desire to honor the reality of the ways the terms have been used alongside the implications of these usages. He is careful, nuanced, and balanced in his proposal.

While many present-day Baptists may not be inclined to express their view of biblical authority in terms such as “infallible” and “inerrant,” it is possible to discern in the functional usage of 1677 and 1742 something that is more viable than the modal usage of 1905 and later. If and when infallibility is taken to exalt the divine inspiration to the virtual suppression of the human so as to have a “docetic” Bible or when it is a call to reject virtually all literary criticism of the Bible, it would need to be resisted for the sake of an open Bible. On the contrary, functional infallibility served to place the Bible high above natural religion, general revelation, and the historic Church with its tradition as the supreme source of Christian truth. It could be reinterpreted today in terms of the supremacy or finality of “special revelation” as climaxed in Jesus Christ in the face of the rival claims of non-Christian religions and ideologies. When infallibility is virtually a synonym for the unique authority of the message of the Bible, it need not be resisted but perhaps only translated and then affirmed.¹⁵

¹⁵Garrett, “Biblical Infallibility and Inerrancy According to Baptist Confessions,” 1:130–31.

What is more, Garrett's balanced approach, much like his thoroughness, manifests itself in controversy. This can be seen in his 2008 *Baptist Standard letter*, "Honor Baptists' Calvinist Roots." In this letter, Garrett objects to something "my friend Fisher Humphreys" (with his co-author Paul Robertson) wrote in their book, *God So Loved the World: Traditional Baptists and Calvinism*. Humphreys and Robertson referred to "traditional Southern Baptists' as non-Calvinist Southern Baptists," while admitting that most "influential Baptist leaders" "of the first three centuries of Baptist history" were indeed Calvinists. Assessing the names of these Calvinist Baptists provided by Humphreys and Robertson, Garrett concluded that they effectively were suggesting "that in reality only the English General Baptists, the later Free Will Baptists, and twentieth-century Baptists have been 'traditional Baptists.'"

Garrett responds that there are legitimate challenges to make against Calvinism. He concludes, however, that it is "only by disregarding the total evidence of Baptist history" that we can "affirm that the majority of past Baptists in Britain and North America have not been Calvinists in some sense of that term."¹⁶ Garrett would allude to this disagreement two years later in his preface to *Whosoever Will* by writing, "We must indeed acknowledge that there has been a major strand of Calvinism in Baptist life, that is, Baptist Calvinism, despite the efforts of some to downplay such." His footnote after this statement was a citation of Humphreys's and Robertson's book.¹⁷

What is interesting about this 2008 public disagreement with Humphreys, is that it came just less than a year after his *Alabama Baptist* articles, "Baptists and Calvinism: An Informational Examination," which, by Garrett's own estimation in 2011, caused some "of the neo-Calvinists" to get "hot and disturbed."¹⁸ This open disagreement with Humphreys so soon after his open disagreement with many thoroughgoing Calvinists shows a commitment to balance but also a refreshing refusal to allow oneself to be owned by any camp to the point of abandoning objectivity. It also shows a willingness to express conviction even if doing so challenged friends.

¹⁶Garrett, "Honor Baptists' Calvinist Roots," 2:211–12.

¹⁷Garrett, "Preface (2010)," 4:40.

¹⁸Garrett, "An Interview with Dr. James Leo Garrett, Jr.," 2:213.

II. COLOR

The collected writings are also intriguing in that they demonstrate the many ways that Garrett brought a sense of literary color to his writings. This was often done through the utilization of metaphors, similes, idioms, and other flourishes.

1. *Geographical and Culinary Imagery.* Garrett had a penchant for both culinary and geographical imagery. At the 1961 “Child Life Conference” hosted by the Baptist Sunday School Board, he observed that failing to teach children “what lay between the age of the apostles and the rise of Baptists” is like “requiring Texas history but not requiring also American history and/or world history.”¹⁹ Forty-four years later he described his 2005 presentation, “Baptist Identity and Christian Unity: Reflections on a Theological Pilgrimage,” as being “like Caesar’s ancient Gaul, divided into three parts...”²⁰ The metaphor for which Garrett is perhaps best known, as it also appeared in the first chapter of the first *Systematic Theology* volume, is culinary in nature.

We cannot dispense with basic Christian doctrine if we are to live and serve effectively today as Christians. We can no more eat delicious beef from a boneless cow or work safely in a tall skyscraper that has no structural steel than we can communicate and live out the Christian gospel without some basic Christian doctrine.²¹

Geographical and culinary imagery are wedded in his 1996 “The Distinctive Identity of Southern Baptists vis-à-vis Other Baptists,” when in writing on “Southernness” and “Sectionalism” Garrett notes that, “In respect to the mid-twentieth-century migration of Southern Baptist families to the Northern and Western states, the Southernness might have been described in terms of grits, ham, and red-eye gravy or steak and gravy and mashed potatoes.”²²

2. *Metaphor and Simile.* The collected writings further reveal a

¹⁹Garrett, “Christian Knowledge and Conviction,” in *Book of Proceedings: Child Life Conference, January 31-February 3, 1961* (Nashville: Baptist Sunday School Board, 1961), 86.

²⁰Garrett, “Baptist Identity and Christian Unity: Reflections on a Theological Pilgrimage,” 2:243.

²¹Garrett, “Seeking to Understand Baptist Theology,” 1:39

²²Garrett, “The Distinctive Identity of Southern Baptists vis-à-vis Other Baptists,” 2:53.

pendant for metaphor and simile. In 1991 Garrett likened certain imperiled Baptist distinctives to those species classified as “endangered” by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and argued that these distinctives “may be in danger of serious attrition, if not full extinction.”²³ In 2005 he likened the “tenuous and uncertain” relations between Baptists and the Eastern Orthodox as “moving at the pace of nearly dried concrete.”²⁴ Seminaries seeking to avoid being impacted by the changes in education sweeping the nation in the 1960s, Garrett wrote in 1967, are said to have assumed “an ostrich position” and to have become “Rip Van Winkle’s” sleeping through a revolution.²⁵ Hyper-Calvinism among early British Baptists is likened to “snow in the spring” that “slowly melted under the warmth of Evangelical Revival.”²⁶ He complains in 1961 of the demise of healthy membership practices and of the fact that church letters have “depreciated” “like Confederate money.”²⁷ He wished the reader to understand the plight of Southern Baptist seminaries and seminary professors in 1967:

The SBC seminaries today are like the six children in a family in which the father, a salaried worker, though he earns more dollars than ever before, because of inflation and the rising income of many of his neighbors, cannot support his family as well as when he had three children.²⁸

Garrett explains idiomatically that he and Myrta, his wife, were “poor as ‘Job’s turkey’” in the summer of 1950 when they made their “way in the back seat of a friend’s car to Cleveland, Ohio, for the eighth world congress of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), where our commitment to the Baptist world family was made.”²⁹

3. *Imagery.* The collected writings reveal an author adept at the effective use of attention-grabbing imagery.

²³Garrett, “Protect Baptist Distinctives from Extinction,” 1:33.

²⁴Garrett, “Baptist Identity and Christian Unity: Reflections on a Theological Pilgrimage,” 2:252.

²⁵Garrett, “Crisis in Theological Education,” 2:18–19.

²⁶Garrett, “Baptists and the Awakenings of Modern History,” 10.

²⁷Garrett, “Seeking a Regenerate Church Membership,” 3:144.

²⁸Garrett, “Crisis in Theological Education,” 2:31.

²⁹Garrett, “Baptist Identity and Christian Unity,” 2:245.

In 1959/60, while describing the persecution of nonconformists, Garrett writes that “Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Baptists nestled together in the same bed of nonconformity.”³⁰ He condemns many eighteenth century British clergymen as men who “thought first of their livings, much of their foxhunts and ale, and only occasionally of their flocks.”³¹ Particular Baptists of the eighteenth century are depicted as “dangerously ill” with “the disease” of “antinomian hyper-Calvinism.”³² Garrett is almost incredulous that “one must come into the twentieth century...to find a major evangelical awakening which has been mothered primarily by the Baptists.”³³ Garrett digs deep in his diagnosis of mid-twentieth-century Southern Baptists: “If our forefathers were petrified on the rock of hyper-Calvinism, we are greased on the slicky-slide of activism.”³⁴ Writing of the Baptist neglect of church discipline in the 1960s, Garrett leaned on domestic imagery:

Church discipline is needed as a deterrent to the moral decline of our time. It used to be said of Baptists because of their congregational polity and tendency to air disputes publicly, “The Baptists wash their dirty linen in public.” One wonders whether the time may fast be approaching when Baptists just “hang their soiled linen out to dry.”³⁵

In 1961, speaking of how both eighteenth century Baptists in Philadelphia as well as the earliest Baptists in Charleston, South Carolina, both held to a careful examination of prospective members, Garrett employed nuptial imagery: “What Philadelphia and Charleston conjoined in experience, doctrine, and conduct, let not contemporary Baptists put asunder!”³⁶ Garrett bemoaned how racism “in utter denial of the reconciling power of the cross of Jesus Christ arises with serpentine erectness to hinder the advance of Christian

³⁰Garrett, “Baptists and the Awakenings of Modern History,” 1:7.

³¹Garrett, “Baptists and the Awakenings of Modern History,” 1:8.

³²Garrett, “Baptists and the Awakenings of Modern History,” 1:9.

³³Garrett, “Baptists and the Awakenings of Modern History,” 1:11.

³⁴Garrett, “Baptists and the Awakenings of Modern History,” 1:12.

³⁵Garrett, “Recovering Church Discipline,” 3:134.

³⁶Garrett, “Seeking a Regenerate Church Membership,” 3:143.

witness” in 1963.³⁷

Vivid imagery also helps Garrett in his assessments of modern Baptist controversies. David Allen and Steve Lemke are said in 2010 to have “put in place” “some heavy artillery” in their considerations of limited atonement and irresistible grace (or effectual calling).³⁸ In the same year Garrett asks, “Can Baptists be expected to lead Muslims to saving faith in Jesus Christ if their doctrine of the Trinity is stored in mothballs?”³⁹

Effective imagery is also applied beyond the Baptist fold. Luther is said to have “pour[ed] out the very last dreg of epistemological content” from “the cup of faith” in the way he “[drove] a wedge between faith and the Word of God” in his defense of infant baptism, in Garrett’s 1964 “Luther’s Developing Doctrine of Baptism.”⁴⁰ In 1972 Garrett refers to Arnold Toynbee, Paul Tillich, and John Macquarrie as “three present-day Goliaths.”⁴¹

Arid, this is not.

4. *Sarcasm*. Only rarely did Garrett utilize sarcasm in his collected writings. He does chide in 1967 that:

Theological professors do not want to live in luxury. They only want to be able to purchase and pay for their residences, support their families and put their children through college without the necessity that every wife should be employed outside the home and every husband must take additional engagements so that he works eight days a week and fifty-six weeks a year!⁴²

³⁷Garrett, “Authority for the Christian World Mission,” in *Christ for the World*, comp. and ed. G. Allen West Jr. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1963), 74.

³⁸Garrett, “Preface: *Whosoever Will*,” 4:40.

³⁹Garrett, “The Future of Baptist Theology with a Look at Its Past,” 2:72.

⁴⁰Garrett, “Luther’s Developing Doctrine of Baptism,” 4:54.

⁴¹Garrett, “Three Present-Day Goliaths,” 4:11. Only once, in 1961, does Garrett indulge in alliteration, when he observed, “Many churches have more statistics than sainthood, more conformity than Christlikeness, more diplomacy than discipleship.” It should be noted, however, that this indulgence occurred in a sermon preached before Crescent Hill Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky. Allowances must be made. Garrett, “The Renewed Congregation,” 3:147.

⁴²Garrett, “Crisis in Theological Education,” 2:21.

5. *Humor*. Even less present are instances of humor in Garrett's works. The one instance in the collected writings is so out of character that the reader (and the editor!) cannot help but wonder if Garrett was truly aware of what he was referencing. In an almost surreal turn, Garrett, in his "Who are the Evangelicals?," an entry in his "debate" with Glenn Hinson, quotes a *Wittenburg Door* editorial aside regarding Richard Quebedeaux to the effect that the editors, after the interview, "were not sure whether Mr. Quebedeaux is an evangelical, a Moonie, an evangelical Moonie, an academic evangelical Moonie, or an evangelical who moons Moonies."⁴³

6. *Prophetic Rebuke*. Garrett's prose in the collected writings was sometimes even colored by the heat of prophetic rebuke and challenge. We find, for instance, the thirty-four-year-old Garrett chastising domesticated, materialistic, safe, American Christianity in tones reminiscent of Kierkegaard.

We applaud the statement, "Worship God, not the state," and fail to realize that it also means, "Worship God, not mammon." Church membership and crime both are registering record highs. The line of demarcation between church and world sans church discipline is often not perceptible. Magnificent new edifices, misnamed "churches" or "sanctuaries," perhaps to the poor of the world point as much to American materialism as to the gospel of the lowly Nazarene. Facing a worldwide opportunity for the Christian gospel, we falter impotently with a substandard discipleship.⁴⁴

One does not necessarily get this kind of stridency in the *Systematic*, for instance, but one needs to know that this heart still beats in the author of the *Systematic*. Once again, we find Garrett thundering:

Some churches have seemingly become country clubs

⁴³Garrett, "Who Are the Evangelicals," 2:105, n. 110. There is some self-effacing (and perhaps unintentional) humor in Garrett's 1962 recollection of how, as a younger man, he "had gathered a sheaf of texts from the Epistle to the Hebrews into what I then called a sermon...and preached it lustily to the members of the congregation I was then serving and repeatedly elsewhere." Garrett, "Recovering My Priesthood," *Home Missions* (February 1952): 14.

⁴⁴Garrett, "Baptists and the Awakenings of Modern History," 1:12.

whose standard of membership is lower than that of the P.T.A. or the civic clubs. A new book has just appeared in our country entitled “The Suburban Captivity of the Church.” Are the churches truly captive to materialism, to “the American way of life,” to racial segregation, or, as James W. McClendon has recently put it, to “Mickey Mouse morals and middle-class mores”? If so, then the time for renewal is here.⁴⁵

Garrett was clearly not averse to confronting his audiences with prophetic challenge. This can be seen in his defense of Baptist distinctives. After outlining what he saw as threats to the Baptist distinctives of “believer’s baptism by immersion, religious freedom for all human beings, and cooperative missions,” he called for the listeners to take an active role in safeguarding these: “Who will prevent three major Baptist beliefs from becoming extinct among the Baptists? Will you?”⁴⁶ So too with the distinctive of regenerate church membership: “Could it be that we Southern Baptists are not exemplary in regard to a regenerate membership because we have to a degree abandoned in practice what we have formerly advocated in principle?”⁴⁷ And again, Garrett asks, “Can we have renewal without a more adequate concern and method in receiving members into our churches and maintaining the integrity of our churches?” His conclusion: “A mere human association can afford to dismiss such a question; the people of God cannot.”⁴⁸

These examples and others like them in the collected writings are significant. They reveal not only Garrett’s personality and convictions but also, yes, the passion with which he held and articulated them.

III. INNOVATION

One revelation arising from the collected writings is the reality that Garrett was at times innovative and even creative, attributes not frequently used to describe him by readers and reviewers of the *Systematic* alone. Sometimes this innovation took the form of unique

⁴⁵Garrett, “Baptists and the Awakenings of Modern History,” 3:148.

⁴⁶Garrett, “Protect Baptist Distinctives from Extinction,” 1:37.

⁴⁷Garrett, “Seeking a Regenerate Church Membership,” 3:135.

⁴⁸Garrett, “The Renewed Congregation,” 3:149.

terminology that, if not necessarily originating with Garrett, was at the least popularized by him, certainly in Southern Baptists contexts.

1. *Dortian Calvinism*. Take, for instance, the term “Dortian Calvinism.” Garrett’s earliest usage of the term in print would appear to be in his 2007 *Alabama Baptist* articles—written at the invitation of editor Bobby Terry and published later as a booklet—entitled “Baptists and Calvinism: An Informational Examination.” Here and elsewhere, Garrett defines “Dortian Calvinism” as the five tenets popularly described by the TULIP acronym.⁴⁹

We cannot say that this terminology originated with Garrett. There is a 1984 reference to “the staunch principles of Dortian Calvinism that the early settlers brought with them” in *American Colonial Writers, 1606–1734*, and Ronald J. Vandermolén wrote of Daniel Whitby’s denial of “Dortian Calvinism’s five points” in the 1992 *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*.⁵⁰ Of these two references, Vandermolén’s is the one most likely consonant with Garrett’s usage of it. While we must stop short of saying that the terminology of “Dortian Calvinism” originated with Garrett, it is certain that Garrett is the theologian most identified with the term and there can be no denying that this language seems to proliferate in Southern Baptist written sources and online *after* Garrett’s usage of it.⁵¹

“Dortian Calvinism” did not appear without some measure of pushback. Two years after the *Alabama Baptist* articles appeared, Michael A. G. Haykin, writing at the Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies, addressed the term:

Recently I was asked by hereiblog: Can you explain the difference between “Dortian” Calvinism and “regular” Calvinism? Historically, the first term has no history. Those using Dortian Calvinism seem to mean 5-point

⁴⁹Garrett, “Baptists and Calvinism,” 2:194-95. See also his reference to “Dortian Calvinism’s five points” 2:199. He employs “Dortian” some thirty-three times in these articles.

⁵⁰Emory Elliott, *American Colonial Writers, 1606–1734* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 1984), 98; Ronald J. Vandermolén, “Gill, John (1697-1771),” in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 153.

⁵¹Malcolm Yarnell has acknowledged Garrett’s use of the term and points, specifically, to Garrett’s 2007 *Alabama Baptist* articles. Yarnell, “Calvinism: Cause for Rejoicing, Cause for Concern,” in *Calvinism: A Southern Baptist Dialogue*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen and Brad J. Waggoner (Nashville: B&H, 2008), 80. Mark R. Stevenson, *The Doctrines of Grace in an Unexpected Place* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017), 40.

Calvinism and have coined the term after the Synod of Dort that made the 5 points important. If you read Calvinists prior to the last decade you can find nobody talking about Dortian Calvinism. But, from its usage it appears to be a bad term—and it appears that by it one should read “unevangelistic Calvinism.”⁵²

Haykin’s dislike of the term also likely serves to identify Garrett as the popularizer of it when, in seemingly his only other reference to the term in his 2007 “Brief Reply to Dr. Garrett,” Haykin applies quotes to Garrett’s use of “Dortian Calvinism.”⁵³

We may conclude that Garrett brought the obscure language of “Dortian Calvinism” into wide usage among Southern Baptists who discuss these issues.

2. *Suprema scriptura*. So, too, with Garrett’s use of *suprema scriptura* as a corrective for and nuance of *sola scriptura*. In 1978, Garrett, in his “Sources of Authority in Baptist Thought,” demonstrated that Baptist confessions and theologians “have affirmed the supreme authority, as distinct from the sole authority, of the scriptures.” Alongside these Garrett noted the many who hold to the Bible as the sole authority and concluded that “Baptists have regarded the Scriptures as either the sole or the supreme doctrinal authority under the Lordship of Christ or the sovereignty of God.”⁵⁴ While Garrett did not explicitly use “*suprema scriptura*” in this 1978 article, he would nine years later refer to this article as his “historical study of *sola scriptura* and *suprema scriptura* among Baptists.”⁵⁵ Here, then, is where Garrett first fleshed the concept out in print.

The term was important to Garrett. He used it frequently and even in the context of debate, as when, in *Perspectives on Church Government*, he challenged James White to acknowledge that he actually holds to *suprema scriptura* since the term would “enable Dr. White to attain his goal of examining all tradition ‘in the light

⁵²Michael A. G. Haykin, “‘Dortian Calvinism’ and ‘Regular’ Calvinism,” *Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies*, August 17, 2009, <http://andrewfullercenter.org/media/blog/2009/08/dortian-calvinism-and-regular-calvinism?rq=Dortian>.

⁵³Michael A. G. Haykin, “Baptists and Calvinism: A Brief Reply to Dr. Garrett,” *Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies*, August 6, 2007, <http://andrewfullercenter.org/media/blog/2007/08/baptists-and-calvinism-a-brief-reply-to-dr-garrett?rq=Dortian>

⁵⁴Garrett, “Sources of Authority in Baptist Thought,” 1:152-63.

⁵⁵Garrett, “The Teaching of Recent Southern Baptist Theologians on the Bible,” 1:211, n. 108.

of Scripture.” He pressed Danny Akin on the same point in the same work.⁵⁶

What has been the impact of Garrett’s concept of *suprema scriptura*? First, many acknowledge Garrett as the originator of the term. Gabriel Fackre referenced in 1993 “Garrett’s introduction of the phrase ‘*suprema scriptura*’ in the place of the traditional *sola*.”⁵⁷ Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Daniel J. Treier refer to “the Latin term *suprema scriptura*” as “James Leo Garrett’s suggestion.”⁵⁸ Rhyne Putman writes that Garrett “offers the helpful term *suprema scriptura*...”⁵⁹ and has more recently asserted that Garrett “coined the phrase *suprema scriptura* as a helpful complement to the Reformation phrase *sola scriptura*.”⁶⁰

In terms of the abiding influence of Garrett’s championing of this terminology, the impact would appear to be significant as even a cursory examination of how frequently the term arises, with or without attribution, largely, but not exclusively, among Southern Baptists who write about issues of scripture and authority will reveal. In his *The Formation of Christian Doctrine*, Malcolm Yarnell observed that Garrett “proposed the nuanced category of the supremacy of Scripture (*suprema scriptura*), in contradistinction to the simplistic Reformation category of Scripture alone (*sola scriptura*).” Yarnell went on to argue that Garrett’s “proposal is linguistically and pneumatically preferable to the Reformed suggestion concerning the adoption of the alternative category of unaccompanied Scripture (*nuda scriptura*).”⁶¹

Pastor Kurt Jurgensmeier is persuaded by Garrett’s use of *suprema scriptura* and argues for its preferability in his pastor’s training curriculum.⁶² In 1999, Warren McWilliams published *Dear Chris* with Baylor University Press, a series of letters between a fictional professor

⁵⁶Garrett, “Response by James Leo Garrett Jr.,” 285, 186.

⁵⁷Gabriel Fackre, “The Surge in Systematics,” *The Journal of Religion* 73, no. 2 (April 1993): 226.

⁵⁸Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Daniel J. Treier, *Theology and the Mirror of Scripture* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2015), 81. Steve Harmon writes of “[s]everal Baptist theologians” who “are increasingly willing to speak of the Bible as the supreme authority for faith and practice, while explicitly admitting other subordinate sources to a pattern of religious authority,” naming Garrett first among these. Steven R. Harmon, *Towards Baptist Catholicity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 32.

⁵⁹Rhyne R. Putman, *In Defense of Doctrine* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2015), 214.

⁶⁰Rhyne R. Putman, *The Method of Christian Theology* (Nashville: B&H, 2021), 132.

⁶¹Malcolm Yarnell, *The Formation of Christian Doctrine* (Nashville: B&H, 2007), 28.

⁶²Kurt Jurgensmeier, “Training Timothy,” *New Life Community Church*, June 2012, <http://trainingtimothy.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/23190826/7.10-The-Limitations-of-Scripture-Not-All-the-Information-We-Need.pdf>.

and former student addressing various issues of the Christian life and ministry. When Chris mentions “sola scriptura” to “Dr. Mac,” he responds by saying that he personally “like[s] a suggestion by one of my seminary profs. He proposed *suprema scriptura* or the supremacy of Scripture as a more accurate depiction of our view.” Dr. Mac goes on to define the term: “The Bible is our highest authority, but we acknowledge a limited role for other authorities.” In the endnotes McWilliams cites Garrett as the source of the proposal.⁶³

Perhaps most significantly, Steve Harmon speaks of “Garrett’s suggestion of *suprema scriptura*” and observes that Garrett’s “suggestion...has influenced the text of the reports from the conversations between the Baptist World Alliance and the Anglican Consultative Council and from the second series of conversations between the Baptist World Alliance and the Catholic Church, both of which describe the Baptist perspective as ‘*suprema scriptura*’...”⁶⁴ Is it at least possible that Garrett’s most innovative contribution to theological discourse is the introduction of *suprema scriptura* to the lexicon?

3. *Hyper-Calvinism*. Another area of innovation is Garrett’s proposed definition of hyper-Calvinism. This is interesting insofar as Garrett seemed aware of the possibility of his creative contribution in this regard and alluded to this possibility more than once. In his 2010 article, “The Future of Baptist Theology with a Look at Its Past,” Garrett writes:

I have offered, possibly for the first time, five distinguishing marks of Hyper-Calvinism: the supralapsarian order of divine decrees, the pre-temporal covenant of redemption made by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, eternal justification somewhat separated from the exercise of faith in time, rejection of offers of grace to the non-elect, and antinomianism.⁶⁵

He asserts the same possibility later in his interview with A. Chadwick Mauldin.⁶⁶ Whether or not Garrett was indeed the first to propose

⁶³Warren McWilliams, *Dear Chris* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 1999), 90, 183, n. 90.

⁶⁴Steven R. Harmon, *Baptist, Catholics, and the Whole Church* (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2021), 235, n. 233.

⁶⁵Garrett, “The Future of Baptist Theology with a Look at Its Past,” 2:67.

⁶⁶Garrett, “An Interview with Dr. James Leo Garrett, Jr.,” 2:219.

such a detailed definition of hyper-Calvinism, it is a creative contribution to soteriological theology that he himself acknowledged.

4. *Theological Education*. Garrett was also aware of his role in making unique contributions in the area of theological education. In 2005, he reflected:

At the end of my first year as an instructor at Southwestern—the summer of 1950—I introduced two new courses to the Southwestern curriculum and seemingly to SBC theological education, one on Roman Catholic theology and the other on the history of Baptist theology.⁶⁷

His acknowledgment of the uniqueness of these courses should not be seen as hubris, a criticism one would search in vain to find of Garrett. They rather reflect an honest awareness on the part of Garrett that at the age of twenty-five he was seeking to bring new approaches to venerable established institutions and their coursework.

5. *History of Doctrine Proposal*. Garrett also showed an awareness of his own innovative contributions when, after providing an extensive survey in his 1971 “The History of Christian Doctrine: Retrospect and Prospect” of writings on and the various approaches to the history of doctrine, he offers “a proposal” concerning “one method which has not been, it seems, employed as yet within any published history of Christian doctrine . . . namely, a treatment, at least after the Council of Chalcedon (451), of the history of Christian doctrine according to the major confessional traditions, Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant, with the approach of men, movements, councils, and creeds being followed under each confessional division.”

Garrett proposed that the completion of his unique proposal “is hardly possible for one human being.” Then, Garrett made the proposal outright:

Therefore, the writer hereby proposes that a team of closely cooperating scholars carefully chosen but definitely interconfessional, interperiodic, international,

⁶⁷Garrett, “Baptist Identity and Christian Unity,” 2:245.

and intercontinental be convoked to establish a working basis for a new, comprehensive history of Christian doctrine and to pursue to completion the writing and publication of such a multi-volume series. The critical editions of the works of the Greek and Latin Fathers and of the Protestant Reformers produced within the last century afford a reasonably adequate basis for such a project, though the lack of such for the non-Greek Eastern Fathers, for certain medieval writers, and for many Greek and Russian writers is to be acknowledged. The value of a comprehensive new history of Christian doctrine can hardly be overestimated. But for its realization there must be a high degree of dedication as well as competence. Who indeed does qualify?⁶⁸

Here again, Garrett evidenced innovation and creativity. The collected works offer a more full-orbed picture of Garrett the theologian and reveal the development and articulation of ideas, terminology, and proposals that certainly should balance out any suggestion that Garrett was merely a chronicler or arranger of the ideas of others.

IV. ANTICIPATION

The collected writings also reveal that Garrett sought to anticipate theological and ecclesiological trends and movements—sometimes successfully and sometimes not—and, at points, possessed a sense of self-awareness in this area as well.

For instance, one may sense Garrett's frustration at his failure to anticipate in 1954 the "Vital Issues for Southern Baptists" that he articulated in 1968.

The author has had various opportunities during the intervening years to reflect upon these issues and to ask himself to what extent he was correct in identifying the major issues then faced by Southern Baptists and to what extent the issues have changed since that time. The most obvious omission from the 1954 list was the race issue. Here the author clearly failed to

⁶⁸Garrett, "Baptist Identity and Christian Unity," 4:81–97.

anticipate the impact of the Supreme Court decision and of social change upon the lives and consciences of Southern Baptists. Also, one may readily argue that such issues as the nature of biblical literature and the role of biblical criticism, Christian baptism and the Lord's Supper, eschatological differences, and problems of personal and social morality should have been included in the 1954 list of "Vital Issues for Southern Baptists."⁶⁹

Here we see Garrett's typical humility, but we see more than that. We see also his desire to be a faithful and accurate surveyor not only of the current scene but also of movements and questions to come. Again, in the fall of 2017, Garrett reflected in his preface to volume 2 of *The Collected Writings* on what he saw as his failure to anticipate certain trends and movements. Garrett stated that he wished he would have anticipated the rise of "the important neo-Calvinist movement among Southern Baptists with the advent of the twenty-first century."⁷⁰

1. *Southern Baptists and Anabaptist Studies*. In 1957, a thirty-two-year-old Garrett, influenced by George Hunston Williams at Harvard, and shaped in his convictions by his friendships with William R. Estep Jr., John Howard Yoder, Franklin H. Littell, and Harold S. Bender, recognized Anabaptist studies as a lacuna in "Baptist ranks," then moved to a number of concrete proposals for Southern Baptist engagement with this Anabaptism.⁷¹

Six years later Estep would write *The Anabaptist Story*. Four years after that Garrett "had the opportunity to help bring together, in collaboration with Dr. Yoder, the modern heirs of Anabaptism" at the Conference on the Concept of the Believers' Church at Southern Seminary. Fifty-five years after Garrett's initial call for greater engagement, Southwestern Seminary would host the "Anabaptism and Contemporary Baptists" conference.⁷² To be sure, as has been mentioned, there were Southern Baptists engaged in considerations of

⁶⁹Garrett, "Vital Issues for Southern Baptists (1968)," 2:24.

⁷⁰Garrett, "Preface," 2:xiii–xiv

⁷¹Garrett, "Anabaptism," 1:259.

⁷²"Anabaptism and Contemporary Baptist Conference," *Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary*, January 30–31, 2012, <http://media.swbts.edu/collection/53/anabaptism-and-contemporary-baptists-conference>.

Anabaptist studies, but, as Garrett said, Southern Baptist engagement was overall tepid. To a very real extent, Garrett, alongside Estep and others, both anticipated and helped to lay the groundwork of increased Southern Baptist interest in and engagement with Anabaptism.⁷³

2. *Regenerate Church Discipline*. It is undeniable that Garrett also anticipated in numerous ways the emphasis on the reclaiming of regenerate church membership that one may encounter in many Southern Baptist quarters today. Garrett emphasized regenerate church membership and church discipline in published works throughout his teaching and writing career, doing so in 1954,⁷⁴ 1958,⁷⁵ 1959/60,⁷⁶ 1961,⁷⁷ 1962,⁷⁸ 1995,⁷⁹ 2009,⁸⁰ 2010,⁸¹ and 2015.⁸² His most prolific contributions to the issue were in the early 1960s, and the most notable of these would have to be his 1962 Broadman Historical Monograph booklet *Baptist Church Discipline*, with its republishing of the 1773 Charleston *Summary of Church Discipline*. Garrett was clearly calling for a renewal among the churches in this area, bemoaning in 1960 that church discipline was “one of the most neglected and unpopular themes of our era” and challenging his readers to act.⁸³ The next year he complained in the pages of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology* that while the example of Southern Baptists was sought by others in various areas of church life, there was tragically one where it was not: “a regenerate church membership.”⁸⁴

Garrett’s frustration on this matter would resurface in the 2004 Baptist Standard Bearer republication of *Baptist Church Discipline* when, in the preface, he would observe that “there is little evidence

⁷³Garrett, “Preface,” 1:xviii.

⁷⁴Garrett, “Vital Issues for Southern Baptists,” 2:3; “Ecclesiology: The Crucial Issue (pt.2),” 3:8.

⁷⁵Garrett, “History of Baptist Theology,” 1:3.

⁷⁶Garrett, “Baptists and the Awakenings of Modern History,” 1:7–8; “Recovering Church Discipline,” 3:131–34.

⁷⁷Garrett, “Seeking a Regenerate Church Membership,” 1:1:35–44; “The Renewed Congregation,” 3:145–50.

⁷⁸Garrett, *Baptist Church Discipline*, 3:151–77

⁷⁹Garrett, “Modern Emphases in Baptist Theology,” 1:62.

⁸⁰Garrett, “My Journey as a Baptist Christian,” 1:114; “Baptist Theology with James Leo Garrett Jr.,” 1:119–20.

⁸¹Garrett, “Should Baptist Churches Adopt Open Membership? No.,” 3:178–81.

⁸²Garrett, “Foreword,” 3:95–96.

⁸³Garrett, “Recovering Church Discipline,” 3:131, 134.

⁸⁴Garrett, “Seeking a Regenerate Church Membership,” 3:135.

of a renaissance of the intentional and consistent practice of any congregational discipline, apart from the discipling of new Christians, in churches related to the larger Baptist conventions in the United States.”⁸⁵ Even so, one might agree that regenerate church membership certainly has not seen the renewal it needs while yet seeing not only positive signs of its recovery in significant ways as well as evidences of Garrett’s own role in anticipating and influencing this partial but significant recovery.

Founders Ministries, for instance, was itself founded by Tom Ascol, one of Garrett’s former students. Ascol republished Garrett’s 1959 “Church Discipline: Lost but Recoverable,” where it is currently recommended more than once on the Founders website under current articles. Over the years Founders has offered a number of other positive references to Garrett and his ecclesiological work (while being a bit less enthused about Garrett’s soteriological work).

Furthermore, at the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Indianapolis in 2008, a resolution on regenerate church membership was passed with final wording resulting from a collaboration between Tom Ascol, Malcolm Yarnell, and Bart Barber.⁸⁶ All three are former students of Garrett who have publicly stated their indebtedness to him. This resolution is one of the great symbolic pieces of evidence of Garrett’s abiding influence on Southern Baptist ecclesiology.

Garrett’s influence on and anticipation of a renewal of emphasis on regenerate church membership and church discipline can be seen in the number of works from Baptist pens now calling for a return to this Baptist ideal as well as the number of works that specifically mention Garrett’s impact in this area. Garrett’s ecclesiological work is referenced in *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches* (2005), in *Walking Together: A Biblical Reflection on Biblical Church Disciplines* (2007), for which Garrett also wrote the Foreword, in *Restoring Integrity in Baptist Churches* (2007), in *The Church: The Gospel Made Visible* (2012), and many more. Garrett was asked to write the Foreword to the 2015 *Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age*, a book edited by Mark Dever and

⁸⁵Garrett, *Baptist Church Discipline*, 3:152.

⁸⁶“An Regenerate Church Membership and Church Member Restoration,” *Southern Baptist Convention*, June 1, 2008, <https://www.sbc.net/resource-library/resolutions/on-regenerate-church-membership-and-church-member-restoration/>.

Jonathan Leeman of Nine Marks Ministries.

The undeniable influence of Garrett's writings on regenerate church membership and discipline has been plainly assessed more than once by students and observers. In 1991, David Dockery and Paul Basden wrote that the theme of the church "has ranked foremost in the thought of James Leo Garrett, Jr.," concluding that "he, perhaps more than anyone else in recent memory, has led this current generation of Baptists to focus on the church."⁸⁷ This was written in *The People of God: Essays on the Believers' Church*, a book written exclusively by "former students, colleagues, or teachers of James Leo Garrett, Jr." and dedicated to Garrett.⁸⁸ In 2005, R. Stanton Norman gave extensive space to summarizing Garrett's 1961 call for a renewal of regenerate church membership, finally concluding that "Southern Baptists (and all Baptists for that matter) would do well to hearken to the concerns identified by Garrett" and that "failure to heed these warnings will result in irreparable harm to our churches."⁸⁹ It would not be too much to say that Garrett's connection to current Southern Baptist efforts to affect a renewal in the area of regenerate church membership actually goes beyond anticipation to a degree of causation.

V. EMPHASES

1. *Consistent Opposition.* Before Garrett's most consistent emphases are identified, we should consider what the objects of his most consistently negative assessments are. One of these is Dispensationalism. In 1985, he writes of J. Frank Norris being "sympathetic to a new theological system known as Dispensationalism" and observes that "many Southern Baptists" fail to understand that Dispensationalism "was alien to the Baptist heritage with its strong emphasis upon the churches and the Great Commission." Fifteen years later he lingered on the question at even greater length.⁹⁰ Garrett also observed that Southern Baptists of the 1920s were not "significantly attracted to" Dispensationalism and, in the next sentence, says that they instead

⁸⁷Paul A. Basden and David S. Dockery, eds., *The People of God* (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), ix.

⁸⁸Basden and Dockery, *The People of God*, ix.

⁸⁹R. Stanton Norman, *The Baptist Way* (Nashville: B&H, 2005), 59-61.

⁹⁰Garrett, "Who are the Baptists?," 1:30; "The Future of Baptist Theology with a Look at its Past," 1:30.

“believed, preached, and taught the gospel of Jesus Christ...”⁹¹

Garrett has also consistently critiqued, rejected, and warned against Hyper-Calvinism. The references are numerous and appear time and time again in the collected writings (in 1958,⁹² 1959/60,⁹³ 1974,⁹⁴ 1983,⁹⁵ 1985,⁹⁶ 1997,⁹⁷ 2007,⁹⁸ 2010,⁹⁹ and 2011¹⁰⁰). Repeatedly, Garrett warns that Hyper-Calvinism is missions-killing, church-killing, invitation-killing, and holiness-killing as it is antinomian in its thrust.

Landmarkism is likewise the consistent focus of Garrett’s concern. In 1996, Garrett wrote:

...Landmarkism never was fully accepted or became deeply rooted among the Southern Baptists in the Atlantic coastal states from Maryland to Georgia. Neither English Baptists nor Northern Baptists (USA) had a Landmark movement. Only with the two present-day Landmark Baptist bodies, the American Baptist Association and the Baptist Missionary Association of America, have Southern Baptists in the latter half of the twentieth century had any common Landmark bond.¹⁰¹

Here, as with Dispensationalism, Garrett depicts Landmarkism as a deviation from majority Southern Baptist practice. In 1958, Garrett recounted the Landmarkist “defection” from the Southern Baptist Convention in 1905.¹⁰² Twenty-seven years later he wrote of how Landmarkism wrought conflict in the Convention: “it affected foreign mission work,” it “contributed to the criticism” and resignation

⁹¹Garrett, “Are Southern Baptists ‘Evangelicals?’,” 2:140.

⁹²Garrett, “History of Baptist Theology,” 1:4.

⁹³Garrett, “Baptists and the Awakenings of Modern History,” 1:9-10, 12.

⁹⁴Garrett, “Epilogue (1974),” 2:228.

⁹⁵Garrett, “Southern Baptists as Evangelicals,” 2:169; “Are Southern Baptists ‘Evangelicals?’,” 2:128, 130.

⁹⁶Garrett, “Who Are the Baptists?,” 1:27.

⁹⁷Garrett, “Should Southern Baptists Adopt the Synod of Dort?,” 2:189.

⁹⁸Garrett, “Baptists and Calvinism,” 2:194, 199-201, 206.

⁹⁹Garrett, “The Future of Baptist Theology with a Look at Its Past,” 2:68

¹⁰⁰Garrett, “An Interview with Dr. James Leo Garrett, Jr.,” 2:218-220.

¹⁰¹Garrett, “The Distinctive Identity of Southern Baptists vis-à-vis Other Baptists,” 2:51.

¹⁰²Garrett, “History of Baptist Theology,” 1:5.

of William Whitsitt, and eventually left the Convention, though its impact lingered “for at least two-thirds of the twentieth century.”¹⁰³ In 2009, Garrett reminisced about how Myrta Ann Garrett’s home church had seen conflict when a division arose “between Landmark and Convention Baptists.”¹⁰⁴ His plainest statement on the matter was in the same article when he wrote under the heading, “The Challenge of Landmarkism”:

Beginning to teach at Southwestern Seminary in 1949 and frequently interim pastor of Baptist churches in North Texas, I confronted Landmarkism—not so much its “trail of blood” successionism but its anti-alien immersionism, local church communion—or communion with “those of like faith and order”—and less than satisfying attitude toward non-Baptist Christians. I was restless in that context and looked for a Baptist heritage other than Landmarkism.¹⁰⁵

2. *The Priesthood of the Believer.* Garrett’s consistent and positive emphases are readily apparent in the collected writings. One such emphasis is the priesthood of the believer. Garrett’s references to the priesthood of the believer are numerous. It is worth noting that one of the organizational categories for volume 8 of *The Collected Writings* is “The Priesthood of All Believers.” This section will consist of six chapters comprised of three works from the 1960s, two from the 1970s, and one from the late 1980s. This does not account, of course, for the other numerous references to and explanations and defenses of the doctrine throughout Garrett’s works spanning the decades.

The most remarkable and the most personal of Garrett’s accounts concerning the significance of the priesthood of every believer is his 1962 *Home Missions* article, “Recovering My Priesthood,” in which he recounts with a degree of feeling how he evolved from seeing this doctrine as espousing the idea “that every Christian had his own access or entrée to God’s mercy-seat unencumbered by other human beings” to a more robust understanding. Through his

¹⁰³Garrett, “Who Are the Baptists?,” 1:29.

¹⁰⁴Garrett, “My Journey as a Baptist Christian,” 1:111.

¹⁰⁵Garrett, “My Journey as a Baptist Christian,” 1:111.

engagements with the Catholic church, through reading Luther deeply, through “the upheaval of theological controversy in denominational ranks,” through deep study of the New Testament (1 Pet 2:4–10; Rev 1:5–6, 5:9–10; Heb 13:10–19), through encountering young Baptists involved in social reform efforts outside of the United States, through encountering a civil rights march in Washington, DC, and then through the influence of his pastor, Garrett came to see both the corporate implications of this cherished doctrine as well as its demands upon his life in the area of offerings of love, peace, and holiness.¹⁰⁶ This piece reveals how the priesthood of every believer was no mere theory for Garrett. It was formative and, in many ways, may be seen as one of the keystone doctrines that shaped his entire life.

One of the more interesting ways in which the significance of this doctrine for Garrett manifested itself can be found in Garrett’s 1956 *Watchman-Examiner* article, “Should Baptist Churches Have Chancels?” Garrett had read an earlier article entitled “A Baptist Church with a Chancel” in which the author described how his church “recently changed its church architecture from the pulpit-centered to the altar-centered arrangement.”

The church building now has a lectern to the right of the congregation, a pulpit to the left of the congregation, choir stalls facing each other, an altar table, reredos, candlesticks, a bronze cross at the center, and behind the cross a stained-glass window depicting the Savior with outstretched hands, and Gothic panels, two of which slide down to reveal the baptistry.

Garrett’s response reviewed the “six reasons...given for the change to a chancel” and pushed back with his objections.¹⁰⁷ It is at this point in Garrett’s conclusion, however, that he expresses his most fundamental objection. The chancel, he argues, “bespeaks separation between clergy and laity” and “stresses the exclusive rights of ordained clergy.” That is, it “contradicts the cherished truth of the priesthood of every Christian believer.”¹⁰⁸ Garrett would prove

¹⁰⁶Garrett, “Recovering My Priesthood,” 14-15.

¹⁰⁷Garrett, “Should Baptist Churches Have Chancels?” 3:185-88.

¹⁰⁸Garrett, “Should Baptist Churches Have Chancels?” 3:185-88.

dogged in this assertion in his architecture articles. Four years after this original protest appeared in *Watchman-Examiner*, Garrett, in his presentation at the March 1960 “Church Buildings and Architecture Conference,” would observe again that chancels are inconsistent with “free church architecture” as they “contradict...the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer.”¹⁰⁹ He would return again to the idea of “the incompatibility of Gothic architecture with the central features of free church worship” near this conclusion of this presentation.¹¹⁰ Again, the next year, writing for *Church Administration*, he made the same argument. Finally, in a 1972 *Quarterly Review* piece, Garrett objects to Southern Baptist churches speaking of “chancel choirs.” He considers it “a bit strange” since “that Italian-derived medieval term, with its implicitly separation of clergy and laity, contradicts the basic belief of Baptists concerning the priesthood of all Christians, the nature of the church, and the nature of worship!”¹¹¹

3. *Unity and Cooperation.* Time and time again, Garrett’s call for unity and cooperation among Baptists and between Baptists and non-Baptist believers can be found in the collected writings. It is a recurring and major theme. One of the ways that Garrett’s commitment to unity and cooperation can be seen is in how frequently he appealed to the High Priestly Prayer in the collected writings. Dongsun Cho has taken note of Garrett’s usage of John 17 to call “his fellow Southern Baptists to be united with one another, other Baptists, and other non-Baptist Christians.”¹¹²

In 1976, Garrett wondered aloud, rhetorically, whether or not we ought to reckon John 17 as “sideline or mainline New Testament teaching.”¹¹³ In 2007, he called upon his readers “to ask whether the distinctives of Dortian Calvinism must always outweigh the great highly priestly prayer of our Lord for the unity of His disciples (John 17:11, 21–22).”¹¹⁴ In 2010, Garrett writes that Baptists “must know... how our Lord Jesus, according to John 17, prayed for the unity of his disciples...”¹¹⁵ Garrett wrote in late 2017, “I have sought to keep

¹⁰⁹Garrett, “Free Church Architecture,” 3:196.

¹¹⁰Garrett, “Free Church Architecture,” 3:202.

¹¹¹Garrett, “Why Build for Worship?,” 3:216.

¹¹²Cho, “Foreword,” 2:x.

¹¹³Garrett, “Problems, Issues, and Challenges in Christian Unity,” 2:235.

¹¹⁴Garrett, “Baptists and Calvinism,” 2:207.

¹¹⁵Garrett, “The Future of Baptist Theology with a Look at Its Past,” 2:76.

ever in mind our Lord's prayer for the unity of His disciples (John 17:21–22) and our failure to attain its fulfilment."¹¹⁶

His most powerful appeal to unity and cooperation can be found in his 2005 Samford University lecture tellingly entitled "Baptist Identity and Christian Unity: Reflections on a Theological Pilgrimage." Garrett concluded with these words:

You may be ready to ask, "Why all this attention to Christian unity? Is it not an impossible ideal, like the cessation of war?" Let us turn to the Gospel of John, chapter 17, our Lord's great "high priestly prayer," for the answer. Four times in this recorded prayer Jesus prayed for the unity of his disciples, both present and future (vv.11, 21, 22, 23). Two of the four times he prayed that his disciples might be one as the Father and he are one (vv. 11, 22). Two of the four he prayed that the disciples might be one so that "the world may believe" that the Father has sent the Son (vv. 21, 23). Jesus did not pray that his disciples would be moral; neither did he pray that his disciples would be orthodox, though he could have prayed for either, since he had said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6a). But our Lord did pray, facing the cross, that his disciples might be one. If we love him, as evidenced by obeying him (John 14:23), in view of the brokenness of his body, we must be nothing less than passionate about his prayer.¹¹⁷

VI. CONCLUSION

All of the strengths of the major works are present in the collected writings, yet the collected writings both fill out and flesh out our picture of Garrett as a writer, as a theologian, as a churchman, and as a Christian. Taken together, the Garrett corpus presents us a picture of a very careful, intensely thorough, intentionally balanced, sometimes-innovative theologian who was not averse to writing with passion, with zeal, with, at times, a degree of heat, and with,

¹¹⁶Garrett, "Preface (2017)," 2:xiii.

¹¹⁷Garrett, "Baptist Identity and Christian Unity," 2:255.

ever and always, an eye toward both the edification and the unity of the church.



THE SOCIAL THEOLOGY AND POLITICAL THEOLOGY OF JAMES LEO GARRETT JR.

Malcolm B. Yarnell III*

To read James Leo Garrett's theology properly requires practice, for he was always careful to let others speak amply for themselves before he dared draw any conclusions. He is famous for telling his research doctoral seminar students, "Only when you can state your opponent's position so well that they themselves say, 'Yes, that's what I believe,' can you then begin to debate."¹ That sense of reserve characterized his entire *oeuvre*. Reserve extended from his rehearsal of the data into his conclusions about what he had discovered. Most, if not all, Christian doctrines garnered the interest of Garrett as a systematic theologian. However, these doctrines normally elicited only a chaste judgment from him, even after his herculean reviews of their biblical foundations and historical outworking. It is therefore noteworthy when certain doctrines animated "the dean of Southern Baptist theologians,"² either eliciting strong statements of affirmation or, even more uncharacteristically, denunciation. His momentary flashes of passion are, therefore, especially noteworthy.

In this essay, we highlight one of those rare areas of emphatic doctrinal declaration. His contributions from the 1960s through the 1980s to the larger arena of society and the narrower field of politics have not been reviewed prior to now. But Garrett's thoughts about these aspects of practical theology are worthy of our recollection, precisely because his interactions elicited flashes of passion from this most careful and generous theologian. In this essay, we shall examine Garrett's social theology and political theology. To meet this larger

¹Via the recollection of Christopher Bart Barber, pastor of First Baptist Church of Farmersville, Texas, and president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

²"Influential Baptist theologian James Leo Garrett Jr. dies at 94," *The Christian Century* (February 24, 2020).

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objective, we must consider his teachings on evangelism, on social involvement, on human welfare, on the image of God, on the human conscience, on the liberty of conscience, on the separation of church and state, and on religious freedom.

Garrett was thorough in his research of the various loci which make up the systematic theologian's task. He crafted and followed a method which has proven itself as the appropriate theological procedure for Christians seeking a biblically grounded, historically informed, and evangelically focused result in today's world. Most often Garrett first abridged the Bible's teaching on his subject with reference to its history and grammar in the context of the whole canon. Second, he surveyed major commentators and controversies in Christian history regarding various interpretations of the Bible's teaching in this area. Finally, he summarized his analyses, perhaps offering a brief judgment. While pursuing this approach with certain social and political issues, Garrett pushed the boundaries of his typical restraint in judgment. The motivating issue for Garrett concerned the way in which Christians treat human beings in society and politics. His motivation was sharpened through a crisis on a mission trip.

I. PERSONAL CRISIS

As many have noted, Garrett was a most humble and gentle theologian and churchman. The ground for this character was laid at his conversion, but a profound crisis of conscience prompted him to turn increasingly outward and consider the welfare of his fellow human beings. His little work, "Recovering My Priesthood," published in the *Home Missions* magazine in 1965, reveals a new resolve to develop a compassionate understanding of humanity. First, he studied Scripture and recalled the universality of the Christian priesthood. Second, he was challenged to shift from a modern individualistic understanding to a corporate understanding of that doctrine in his study of the relevant biblical texts.

But "a third and more crucial issue confronted me," he said. Traveling to "one of our most developed Baptist mission fields," he found the believers there ill-equipped to deal with the grave social issues facing their agrarian society.³ Their struggles prompted his

³I have not established this yet, but he may have been referring to Nagaland in India. He once

question, “Had I cared enough and loved sacrificially? Had I offered spiritual sacrifices of devotion and sealed my witness for my Lord with deeds of mercy and compassion?” He next found himself in the United States Capitol, witnessing preparations for a “massive march for civil rights.” He, therefore, also began to question whether he was doing enough to address racism. Upon return to The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and his home church, he was again confronted with the need not merely to think, but to act for others through his pastor’s sermon and through a faculty colleague’s exemplary concern for the poor of that city.

Garrett addressed the problem of racism in the Southern Baptist Convention most powerfully through his theological lectures, but he also addressed the dominant culture’s continuing challenge to orthodox anthropology through displaying personal and professional courage in a daunting environment. He stood boldly with several other professors and received Martin Luther King Jr. at the Louisville seminary. He supported King in spite of their seminary president’s warning that the professors’ actions would cost the seminary thousands of dollars, in spite of controversy within the Southern Baptist Convention, and in spite of security concerns seen visibly in the police presence guarding King.⁴ In his systematic lectures, typically capped by doctrinal subtlety, Garrett became quite frank and roundly condemned southern white interpretations of the curse of Cain, the curse of Ham, and the confusion of tongues in Scripture: “Such exegesis of texts in early Genesis in behalf of racism stands as a model of genuine eisegesis, or the reading into the text one’s presuppositions, biases, and prejudices, instead of reading out of the text its intended meaning.”⁵

James Leo Garrett Jr.’s heart’s desire became not only to teach Christian doctrine but to live out that doctrine in his life. “Such deeds were demonstrations of faith that issued in love, of love that was not limited to words, of service to ‘one of the least of these my brethren.’”⁶ When he began to share with me his desire for me to

glowed with love for those Baptist people in a conversation about the success of the Baptist witness there.

⁴Jeff Hood, *Love Remains: Prophetic Writings* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016), 77.

⁵James Leo Garrett Jr., *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical*, 2nd ed. (2 vols.; North Richland Hills, TX: Bibal, 2000), 1:482.

⁶James Leo Garrett Jr., “Recovering My Priesthood,” *Home Missions* (February 1965): 15. This

speaking at his funeral and to dwell upon his life as an academic, he handed me the original manuscript for this very article. Garrett learned through his study of Scripture and through the providential arrangement of his life that faith must be demonstrated in love. The universal priesthood of all believers calls for spiritual sacrifices. “Our highest priestly function is the bearing of the burdens of our broken, oppressed, and suffering brethren.”⁷ Loving others is integral to true Christian faith, and this ought not be confused with the dreaded “social gospel.”

II. SOCIAL THEOLOGY

Because of his transformation while serving at Southern Seminary, Garrett began to address Baptist involvement in social issues. For instance, he felt led to evaluate the fraught relationship between “two aspects of the mission of the Christian *ecclesia*.” The correlation between Christian evangelism and Christian social involvement had reached a “critical” and “acute” point by 1970.⁸ For many Christians at the time, these two aspects seemed to exist as “either/or tendencies.” On the one side some took the stance of “only evangelism.” On the other side some advocated “only social involvement.” After evaluating biblical guidelines, Garrett provided six arguments favoring each position followed by three warnings against each position. His warnings against tendencies within his own denomination included reminders that saving souls “must mean the total lives of human beings,” that evangelism should be followed by “instruction, nurture, worship,” etc., and that “the primacy of evangelism does not necessarily preclude Christian helping ministries or Christian action for social change.”⁹

Attempting to bring theological clarity to his Christian readers, Garrett rehearsed the biblical witness regarding the necessity for both evangelism and social action. For instance, the prophets of the Old Testament preached against the evils of idolatry “but also against the

essay is scheduled to be published in the eighth volume of Garrett’s *Collected Writings*. Five of the volumes of Garrett’s miscellaneous essays have been published to date. *The Collected Writings of James Leo Garrett Jr. 1950-2015*, ed. Wyman Lewis Richardson (Eugene, OR: Resource, 2017-) [herein *Collected Writings*].

⁷Garrett, “Recovering My Priesthood,” 14.

⁸James Leo Garrett Jr., “Evangelism and Social Involvement,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 12 (1970): 51.

⁹Garrett, “Evangelism and Social Involvement,” 58-59.

exploitation of the poor, dishonesty in business practices, and selfish luxury.”¹⁰ Jesus defined his own coming in two ways: first, “not to be served but to serve,” and second, “to give his life for the ransom of many” (Mark 10:45). The disciples of Jesus are called to teach everything Jesus commanded, including his social teachings (Matt 28:19-20).¹¹ As for the apostles, they declared Christian ministry includes not merely the proclamation of the good news of Jesus’ death and resurrection but also “good deeds” (1 Pet 2:12), “making peace” (Eph 2:15), “lay[ing] down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:16-17), and “to visit orphans and widows in their affliction” (Jam 1:27).¹²

After moving to Baylor University in 1973, Garrett addressed the church relations advisory group of the Texas Department of Public Welfare. He carefully rehearsed the biblical requirements for advancing “human welfare.” “The Old Testament is quite specific in its commandments and provisions concerning the less privileged in Hebrew society.”¹³ He pointed to the general commands for love of family and neighbor (Prov 17:17; Lev 19:18) as well as specific commands to liberate and provide for slaves (Exod 21:2; Deut 15:12-18) and to care for widows and orphans (Exod 22:22-24). Aliens from other lands are “not to be oppressed” (Exod 22:21; 23:9), and the poor are to be protected from perverse justice (Ex 23:6) and perverse lending practices (Exod 22:25; Deut 14:7-11). The poor are, moreover, supposed to be enabled by landowners to procure provision for their basic needs through allowing access to fallow fields (Deut 14:28-29).¹⁴

“Early Christianity had an even more acute sense of neighbor love and compassion for the weak, the physically handicapped, and the less privileged in society.”¹⁵ Garrett noted that Jesus engaged in the ministry of healing as well as teaching. Moreover, Jesus elevated the old covenant command to love one’s neighbor to second place

¹⁰Garrett, “Evangelism and Social Involvement,” 54.

¹¹He also noted that the prophecies of Isaiah concerning the coming Messiah focused upon his bringing justice to and liberation for the oppressed (Isa 42:1-4; 60:1-3). Garrett, “Evangelism and Social Involvement,” 55.

¹²Garrett, “Evangelism and Social Involvement,” 55-56.

¹³James Leo Garrett Jr., “State, Church, and Human Welfare” (Austin, Texas, 12 January 1977), 5. This address is scheduled to be published in volume 8 of Garrett’s *Collected Works*. Thanks to Wyman Richardson for providing a manuscript copy.

¹⁴Garrett, “State, Church, and Human Welfare,” 5-6.

¹⁵Garrett, “State, Church, and Human Welfare,” 6.

among the commandments (Mark 12:28-34). Jesus then gave his own life and called his disciples to do the same (Mark 8:31; John 15:12-13). The love of his disciples for one another was declared their hallmark (John 13:34-35), and the early church took this call seriously through such activities as the voluntary communion of possessions (Acts 2:44-45), the election of seven to serve the widows of the congregation (Acts 6:1-6), as well as the establishment of a male and a female diaconate focused on “ministering, service” (1 Tim 3:8-13; Rom 16:1-2).

Garrett did not merely review the biblical case for social involvement in the pursuit of human welfare. He also summarized the rich history of Christians providing for others. With its Christianizing, the Roman Empire began the promulgation of laws which aided the difficult lives of people. And in the long run, Christianity prompted Western civilization in “the amelioration and ultimate abolition of slavery; improved conditions for laboring people; the upgrading of the role and rights of women; the rejection of infanticide and cruelty to children; the abhorrence of suicide; the care of the hungry, the homeless, the naked, the prisoner, and the refugee; hospitals for the sick; orphanages; institutions for the insane; homes for the aged; and the just war theory.”¹⁶ Garrett was convinced by Scripture and history that Christians must show acute concern for human welfare.

Garrett also provided several definitions to clarify the debate over the relationship between evangelism and social involvement. “Evangelism” means “Christians bearing witness to the good news of God’s action in man’s behalf in Jesus Christ.” Evangelism should not be equated with “high pressure salesmanship” or coercion. On the other hand, neither should evangelism be equated with “any Christian deed, duty, or action in behalf of others.”¹⁷ “Social involvement” means “Christians individually or corporately operative in human society (or outside the churches) for the purpose of human good or well-being.” There are two kinds of social involvement: First, “diakonal service” includes “Christian ministries of helping” such as “healing, caring, sharing, etc.” that result in such active institutions as hospitals, orphanages, and schools. The second kind of social involvement, “social action,” seeks to “change the patterns or structures of

¹⁶Garrett, “State, Church, and Human Welfare,” 7-8.

¹⁷Garrett, “Evangelism and Social Involvement,” 56.

the political, economic, or social order so that these may conform more fully to what they understand to be the good and well-being of mankind in the light of the purpose of God.” Examples of social action include the revivalist-inspired social reforms of the nineteenth century and the civil rights movement of the twentieth century.¹⁸

Southern Baptists’ foremost systematic theologian concluded that evangelism and social involvement are “not contradictory” but “complementary.” He noted three probable consequences of neglecting evangelism, including “a decadent, and ultimately dying, church.”¹⁹ He then identified three probable consequences if Christians neglect social involvement, including “the absence of clear and palpable evidence that Christians really do love their fellow men in all circumstances and conditions with the love that they claim to have received from their Lord and Saviour.”²⁰ He continues, “Today’s need is for both evangelism and the social involvement of Christians, i.e., helping ministries and societal change. Christians must engage both in proclamation by word and enactment by deed.”²¹ The social theology advocated by James Leo Garrett Jr. was grounded in Scripture and history and manifested itself in personal conviction through public proclamation.

III. UNDERDEVELOPED ANTHROPOLOGY

If there is a weakness in Garrett’s theologies of society and politics, I would argue it resides in his underdeveloped theological anthropology. Examples of his relatively thin formal doctrine of humanity can be seen in two important areas, primarily in his doctrine of the image of God but also in his doctrine of the human conscience. Although Garrett noted the importance of “liberty of conscience” in the Baptist tradition, he did not dig a foundation for the doctrine of the conscience in his systematic theology. Scattered though incomplete references to the human conscience in his first *magnum opus* can be found in his discussions of general revelation,²² the image of God, and the knowledge of sin.²³

¹⁸Garrett, “Evangelism and Social Involvement,” 56-57.

¹⁹Garrett, “Evangelism and Social Involvement,” 60-61.

²⁰Garrett, “Evangelism and Social Involvement,” 61.

²¹Garrett, “Evangelism and Social Involvement,” 61.

²²Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, 1:51-58.

²³Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, 1:576-80.

This critique should not be taken as an argument even hinting that Garrett somehow lacked a sensitive conscience. God forbid that that idea would ever be ascribed to such a highly conscientious human being. Rather, we are concerned about what he failed to formalize in his systematic corpus, not with what he did in his life. Much can be known about a man not only by the words he writes in his major works, but also by the admiration he holds for others in scattered writings. Unlike some scholars I have known, who carelessly exalt unsavory thinkers, Garrett chose to write biographies about and provide responses to particularly virtuous and courageous people. For instance, he had this to conclude about the Russian dissident Aleksandr Isaiyevich Solzhenitsyn, “But that Solzhenitsyn is a major witness against the oppressive totalitarian state and for the morality of conscience and the freedom and worth of human beings is seemingly beyond dispute.”²⁴

Garrett also highly respected Joseph Martin Dawson. Dawson was ordained by Benajah Harvey Carroll, who charged his successor at the First Baptist Church of Waco to “know your flock and never let anything come between you and the least one, or the most powerful one of them.”²⁵ Dawson took Carroll’s ordination charge to be concerned for each person in his care quite seriously. Dawson was one of the few Southern Baptist pastors to stand publicly and squarely against the lynching of African Americans in the early twentieth century. Dawson later founded the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, where he boldly advocated for the separation of church and state, defended religious liberty, and was a highly visible “spokesman-activist for social justice.”²⁶ Garrett concluded his review of Dawson’s life and legacy with an uncharacteristically vigorous affirmation: “Joseph Martin Dawson, pastor-preacher, author-editor, denominational leader with far-reaching fraternal relationships, and prophet and activist for social justice, was a man of God for his time and indeed ahead of his time.”²⁷ I am not aware Garrett ever referred so positively to another Christian with the weighty biblical

²⁴Garrett, “Solzhenitsyn: Literary Prophet for the Human Conscience,” in *Collected Writings*, 5:98.

²⁵Garrett, “Joseph Martin Dawson: Pastor, Author, Denominational Leader, Social Activist,” in *Collected Writings*, 5:101.

²⁶Garrett, *Collected Writings*, 5:107-9.

²⁷Garrett, *Collected Writings*, 5:110.

term, “prophet.” Garrett was delighted to serve as director of the J. M. Dawson Institute of Church-State Studies at Baylor University.

It is fascinating that, although his theological mentor at the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, W. T. Conner, developed the aspects of the human person being made in the image of God, Garrett discounts Conner’s doctrine. Conner believed the image of God could be seen in certain capacities which human beings retain even after sin. These include “intelligence,” “freedom,” “rational affection,” “conscience,” and “a spiritual affinity for God.” Garrett responded that Conner’s doctrine “appears to be incompatible with the Pauline texts relative to the *imago Dei*, which uniformly presuppose that the image must be renewed or restored.”²⁸

With deference, I would challenge my mentor to recall the Genesis texts after chapter 3 indicate the *imago Dei* continued. The image was conveyed by human generation (Gen 5:1-3), and penalty came upon those who “shed man’s blood,” because God made them in his image (Gen 9:6). Moreover, the terms “renew” and “restore” imply a continuing existence of some nature. Conner’s doctrine might also have provided Garrett with the substantial core for the high anthropology Garrett himself manifested.²⁹ While Garrett does not provide a clear definition of the human conscience, he does believe the doctrine results in several “implications,” succinctly described as “the uniqueness, accountability, and worth of human beings.”³⁰

Despite the merely suggestive nature of his doctrine of the image of God and its corollary in the human conscience, a high anthropology is suggested in, among other places, Garrett’s review of the literature of religious freedom in his 1976 Day-Higginbotham lectures. In these lectures presented before the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Garrett summarily defined “religious liberty” with reference to the conscience. “Religious liberty” is, according to his 1964 definition, “freedom of conscience in the full exercise of religious faith and practice.”³¹ Finally, Garrett recognized a substantial view of

²⁸Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, 1:460-61.

²⁹Garrett wrote his first dissertation on the theology of Walter Thomas Conner.

³⁰Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, 1:464. He concluded systematically that there are three implications of the image of God: “human beings as religious beings, human beings as valuable to God,” and “human beings as never permanently satisfied with any of the reductionist views of humankind.” Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, 1:465-67.

³¹Garrett, “Religious Liberty, Vatican Council II, and Baptists,” *Review and Expositor*, 175.

the divine image was an important, even if by his reckoning minor, strain in the Baptist understanding of humanity during his 1995 review of Baptist “emphases.”³²

While I may criticize my own theological mentor for not following his mentor into a fuller definition of the *imago Dei*, and while I will propose a fuller doctrine of conscience in my own forthcoming systematic theology, my criticism is friendly. This is because, despite his meager formal treatment of theological anthropology, an underlying strength in his view of humanity compelled him to speak forthrightly, indeed courageously. This truth leaps out when one considers how he chose to address such “hot topics” as social justice and racism, as we have already seen, to a fairly conservative evangelical, American, and southern cultural audience. We must laud Garrett’s continual manifestation of a deep respect for his fellow human beings.

Moreover, Garrett’s underdeveloped anthropology was, to a great extent, offset by his unusual emphases upon other important dogmatic loci. As Paul A. Basden indicated, “Garrett treats in detail some topics not discussed by earlier systematic theologians, for example, discipleship, stewardship, prayer, and missions.”³³ These examples show that Garrett was already pushing the boundaries of theology toward discipleship and ethics, and that his ethics were not merely personal but corporate. That Garrett did not develop a full theological anthropology which might have assisted his entire audience toward reclaiming the necessary coalescence of evangelism with social involvement speaks more to his foresight regarding what his audience needed than to any improper desire on his part.

Garrett likely did not sense a need to develop a fuller anthropology because he moved directly from a divine ontology and economy of love to the human economy of responsive love. Although Garrett bypassed human ontology in his doctrine of love, Garrett treated people with love via an appeal to the very nature of God. In an important essay on divine love, he argued first that God is love. Second, God acts in love, not only in creation and providence but supremely in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Third, due to his divine nature and divine activity, God requires responses of

³²Garrett, “Major Emphases in Baptist Theology,” *Collected Writings*, 1:51n.

³³Paul A. Basden, “James Leo Garrett, Jr. (1935-): Theology,” in *The Legacy of Southwestern: Writings that Shaped a Tradition* (North Richland Hills, TX: Smithfield Press, 2002), 142.

love from his people.³⁴ Garrett's deep respect for other people was thus directly grounded in the nature and activity of the God of the Bible. We believe the application of Garrett's divine ontology to human ontology through a Trinitarian definition of the *imago Dei* and the human conscience will prove helpful. Nevertheless, Garrett's underdeveloped anthropology did not keep him from developing deep respect for other human beings. That deep respect manifested itself not only in his social theology but also in his careful political theology.

IV. POLITICAL THEOLOGY

Garrett's political theology may be considered distinct from yet a subcategory within his social theology. It will be remembered that social theology has to do with Christian involvement in many forms of ministry to human beings for their welfare, whether those activities are classified as "diakonal service" or as "social action." In his political theology, Garrett was primarily concerned with how the Christian and the church relate to the state. Political theology is thus one aspect of social action. Garrett laid the foundations for his political theology in a review of Scripture and history. On that basis, he constructed a political theology which emphasized religious liberty and appreciated the formal separation of the church from the state.

In an essay entitled, "Foundations for Christian Citizenship," Garrett listed 30 truths which enable us "to understand our role as Christians in the civic order today."³⁵ Ten of these lessons were derived from the Old Testament, ten from the New Testament, and ten from Christian history. Among the most fascinating of his findings from the Old Testament were that "Israel was a people in covenant with the Lord (Yahweh) before it was a nation in a governmental or political sense," that "Israel did not deify its kings," and that the prophets "protested social injustice and called for righteousness in society."

In his synopsis of the New Testament's political theology, Garrett detected that Jesus "turned away from an earthly, political messiahship and kingdom" in his earthly ministry, that Jesus was "tried and put to death under both Jewish and Roman authorities," and

³⁴Garrett, "God's Loving-Giving Nature," in *Collected Writings*, 4:15-26.

³⁵James Leo Garrett Jr., "Foundations for Christian Citizenship: Understanding Our Role as Christians," *Baptist Standard* (December 8, 1982): 14.

that “the central conflict portrayed in the apocalypse was/is/will be between the religious and the political.” In the historical section, he noted that the Anabaptists “formed congregations apart from the political structures,” that “religious freedom for all men” was advocated among Christians primarily by theologians affiliated with the believers’ churches, and that “Christians—both evangelicals and the advocates of the social gospel—have been in the vanguard of great societal reforms in the modern era.”³⁶

Paralleling his move in social theology vis-à-vis the human conscience, Garrett was more concerned with religious liberty and the separation of church and state than with defining the liberty of the conscience. Of the three political doctrines emphasized most often by Baptists,³⁷ religious liberty remained most important for Garrett, because it is more central and may arise without the formal separation of church and state. He wrote in 1964 that religious freedom “to a considerably high degree may exist even where established churches still survive.”³⁸ He provided the United Kingdom and the Scandinavian countries as examples. History thus demonstrates that religious freedom could develop by degrees, even in states with official churches. Garrett discerned various “patterns or types of church-state relations” and was careful to avoid overstating the cases for and against each type.³⁹

Despite his effective diminution of the doctrine of the separation of church and state, Garrett affirmed in his 1976 Day-Higginbotham Lectures it remains “the corollary of religious freedom.” Moreover, an institutional division between the state and the church “needs to be implemented wherever possible.”⁴⁰ During the 1970s, when Garrett directed the J. M. Dawson Institute, edited the prestigious *Journal of Church and State*, and served as religion professor at Baylor University, he reviewed numerous books regarding church-state

³⁶Garrett, “Foundations for Christian Citizenship: Understanding Our Role as Christians,” 14-15.

³⁷Liberty of conscience, religious freedom, and the separation of church and state.

³⁸Garrett, “Religious Liberty, Vatican Council II, and Baptists,” 175.

³⁹He listed four principal types: “the state’s domination of the church or churches,” “one church’s domination of the state and indeed of society,” “collaboration between an established church and the civil state,” and “a high degree of separation between the churches and the civil state with considerable freedom for each.” Sub-categories are needed, however, for the different types, including the last. Garrett, “State, Church, and Human Welfare,” 1-4.

⁴⁰James Leo Garrett Jr., “Religious Freedom: Why and How in Today’s World,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 18 (1976): 20.

issues. He also wrote a series of substantial editorials on civil religion, bureaucratic governmental regulation of the churches, and the “no ... establishment” and “free exercise” clauses of the Constitution of the United States.

For instance, Garrett examined the problem of the “privatization” of religion, which the American system may encourage. He admitted the problem exists, but he remained convinced that the separation of church and state was necessary for Baptists to advocate. The answer to the problem of privatization is not state support but active Christian love. Christians are called by Christ to be “salt” and “light” in the world. Their history of active social love, from Tertullian of Carthage to Walter Rauschenbusch to Martin Luther King Jr., demonstrates the continual need for Christians to engage fully in human society. Retreat into a voiceless ghetto is simply not an option. “Now, therefore, the very implication that religion as ‘private’ is to be detached or disengaged from society seems to deny the prophetic, society-changing role of the churches.”⁴¹

On the other hand, as Christians strive to make a difference in society, they must take caution to remember the church’s separate nature and distinct purpose. The “undue interlocking” of government and religion should, therefore, be avoided. “Christians need clearly to differentiate the hand of Caesar, even when covered with the velvet glove of Washington bureaucracy, and the hand of Christ extended by those who believe in, love, and serve him.”⁴² Garrett died less than a year before the tumult of January 6, 2021, in Washington DC. What might he have thought about seeing crosses advance on the Capitol building, or about hearing the name of Christ sung by protestors fighting police, or about watching politicians say they were there to “defend the Christian worldview”? A half century ago, Garrett argued for “the clear detection and resolute avoidance of the dangerous and maleficent form of what many identify as ‘civil religion.’”⁴³ The church of Jesus Christ must engage in “vital religion” rather than

⁴¹James Leo Garrett Jr., “Does Church-State Separation Necessarily Mean the Privatization of Religion?” *Journal of Church and State* 18 (1976): 216. Garrett provided a judicious and friendly review of Rauschenbusch in his second *magnum opus*. James Leo Garrett Jr., *Baptist Theology: A Four Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), 314-18. While recognizing the social and political importance of King, he found the liberation theology of James Deotis Roberts the more substantial as well as “profound.” Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 612-16.

⁴²Garrett, “Religious Freedom,” 22.

⁴³Garrett, “Religious Freedom,” 22.

“civil religion.” And Christians must avoid “culture-religion on the one hand and exclusivist, other-worldly withdrawal on the other.” The way forward is serious “discipleship” to Jesus as Lord.⁴⁴

We noted that the conscience and its liberty are muted in Garrett’s presentation, though they could perhaps have been drawn toward a fuller expression. We saw that church-state separation should be advocated but as a corollary and supportive doctrine rather than a central one. We should also note why and how religious liberty is central to Garrett’s formal political theology. Among the three “distinctives” or “emphases” to “which Baptists have borne a unique testimony,” the second is “religious freedom and the separation of church and state.”⁴⁵ Baptists “have deplored as evil the persecution of human beings for the sake of religion and have boldly advocated the principle of religious freedom, often called ‘soul freedom,’ not for themselves only but for all human beings.”⁴⁶

Garrett first treated the doctrine of religious liberty from a biblical perspective during the eleventh congress of the Baptist World Alliance in 1965.⁴⁷ He added to those findings by comparing the teachings of Romans 13 with Revelation 13. His summary of the “dialectic” between the thirteenth chapter from Paul’s greatest epistle and the thirteenth chapter of John’s apocalypse may jolt those committed either to establishment or to revolution. Romans 13 and Revelation 13, he said, “afford distinctive emphases within the New Testament canon: the one of submission, obedience, taxation, respect, honor, and acceptance of the God-ordained and God-serving establishment and the other of the omniscient, Satanic, and persecuting state—now a beast or monster—that calls unto itself divine worship and is hostile to the Christians, although ultimately subject to the victory of Jesus Christ.” Christians should not assume one is relevant today and the other is not. “Both belong to the New Testament canon.” The “dialectical obligations of obedience and of disobedience” must

⁴⁴Garrett, “Religious Freedom,” 23.

⁴⁵Garrett identified three “Baptist Distinctives or Emphases.” They are “congregations gathered around believer’s baptism by immersion,” “religious freedom and the separation of church and state,” and “evangelization and missions as the task of all churches and all Christians.” Garrett, “Major Emphases in Baptist Theology,” 61-65.

⁴⁶Garrett, “Major Emphases in Baptist Theology,” 64-65.

⁴⁷James Leo Garrett Jr., “The Biblical Basis of Religious Liberty,” in *The Truth that Makes Men Free: Official Report of the Eleventh Congress, Baptist World Alliance*, ed. J. Nordenhaus (Nashville: Broadman, 1966).

be implemented today.⁴⁸

In his 1976 Day-Higginbotham Lectures, Garrett reminded his listeners at Southwestern Seminary that when told by errant authorities “not to teach in this name [of Jesus],” the apostles responded, “We must obey God rather than men.” Indeed, those were the first words of the lecture: “We must obey God rather than men.” I have periodically drawn conviction from those same words when some overwrought authority sought to keep me from speaking the Word of God to whomever God the Father puts before me and however the Spirit leads me.

Garrett’s Southwestern Seminary lectures began by evaluating some 50 key theological documents written during the early modern period for the advocacy of religious toleration. First, he covered the witness from the time of Peter Chelcicky to that of Thomas Helwys. Next, he covered testimony from Roger Williams to the Second Vatican Council. Garrett distinguished religious toleration from religious freedom. “Religious toleration” allows religious dissent but not as a matter of principle. “Religious freedom” or “religious liberty” recognizes the final responsibility of each person to answer to God himself or herself. Especially noteworthy to Garrett in the first lecture were the writings of Sebastian Castellio, who challenged John Calvin’s defense of the execution of Michael Servetus: “To kill a man is not to defend a doctrine, but to kill a man.” After Castellio, Garrett lauded Thomas Helwys for issuing “the earliest appeal for universal religious liberty,” both in England and “indeed all Europe.”⁴⁹

Noteworthy in the second lecture were the contributions of Roger Williams, the Anglo-American Baptist whom Garrett classified as of seminal importance alongside Helwys. Williams defined “conscience” as “a persuasion fixed in the minds and heart of a man, which enforceth him to judge . . . and to doe so and so, with respect to God; his worship, etc. This is found in all mankinde.” He also lauded William Penn, the Quaker, who defined “liberty of conscience” as freedom to worship as God persuades. Penn also noted, “Force may make a hypocrite; ‘it is faith grounded upon knowledge,

⁴⁸Garrett, “The Dialectic of Romans 13:1-7 and Revelation 13: Part Two,” *Journal of Church and State* 19:1 (1977): 20.

⁴⁹See James Leo Garrett Jr., *Advocates of Religious Toleration and Freedom* (Fort Worth: Seminary Baptist Bookstore, 1978).

and consent, that makes a Christian.” While many traditionally laud John Locke for his contributions, Garrett was less than sanguine, noting the famous philosopher held to a “considerable, although limited, ‘toleration.’”⁵⁰

In his third and final Day-Higginbotham Lecture of 1976, Garrett brought together his previous work in answers to why and how we should continually promote religious liberty. First and foremost, religious freedom was the practice of Jesus and the early church. Second, religious liberty is “an implication of the Christian faith.” Third, persecution for the sake of religion remains a problem around the world. Fourth, religious liberty includes “not only freedom of worship but also of witness, education, ministry, publication, and conversion.” Fifth, majority religions, sporadically including some Baptists, “tend to repress” minority religions. Sixth, we live in an increasingly connected world where “new ideas” will spread quickly. Seventh, the Christian mission is “generally able to thrive where religious freedom exists.” Finally, by advocating religious liberty, Christians demonstrate they are “truly dependent upon the gospel, the Bible, and the power, gifts, and leadership of the Holy Spirit.”⁵¹ Garrett concluded his third lecture with six ways American Christians can advance Christian liberty. He focused primarily upon maintaining the separation of church and state, but he also noted that Christians should help Americans achieve political “consensus.”⁵²

Garrett’s writings on social theology and political theology are replete with biblical depth, historical breadth, and immanent practicality. Even while contemporary readers will update his applications to fit an ever-changing cultural context, and while this student hopes to deepen his mentor’s dogmatic presentation of the *imago Dei*, the human conscience, and liberty of conscience, Garrett’s doctrines retain both validity and value. Garrett’s ruminations from Scripture and history about difficult matters in society and politics will offer sage guidance to Christ followers in the pulpit and in the pew who seek to remain faithful to Christ in our own deeply divided society with its own fractious political culture. James Leo Garrett Jr. retains the honor of being the premier writing systematic theologian in the

⁵⁰Garrett, *Advocates of Religious Toleration and Freedom*.

⁵¹Garrett, “Religious Freedom,” 10-16.

⁵²Garrett, “Religious Freedom,” 19-24.

history of Southern Baptists, and those interested in his legacy must now include the loci of social theology and political theology as *sine qua non* Baptist theology.



AN ASSESSMENT OF A MAGNUM OPUS: JAMES LEO GARRETT JR'S "BAPTIST THEOLOGY" AS A GIFT TO 21ST CENTURY BAPTISTS

Jason G. Duesing*

I. INTRODUCTION: OPENING THE DOOR

My encounters with James Leo Garrett Jr. (1925-2020) took place roughly 18 years ago whilst a new Ph.D. student at Southwestern Seminary. I worked my way through my degree in an administrative office, and it was the office Garrett would call when he needed assistance with something important. Frequently, his calls to my desk concerned a certain exterior door in the lower level of Fleming Hall that he would access on his return from Roberts Library to his office. His office was a monument to his intensity and focus for it was one of the few of the internal offices in Fleming Hall without a window, which gave Garrett more room for books and closer proximity to Roberts Library. Thus, given that his hands were often full of books, he counted on the automatic door button to function to assist him in his navigation of the elements from one building to another—and when said door did not open, I received a very kind phone call to see if I could expedite its repair. We refer to Garrett as one of the last Gentlemen Theologians, and he was that in every brief interaction I had with him, but that door, I am not sure it received the same chivalry.

C. S. Lewis, in explaining his mere Christianity, conceived of the traditions of Christianity:

like a hall out of which doors open into several rooms.
If I can bring anyone into that hall I shall have done
what I attempted. But it is in the rooms, not in the hall,

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that there are fires and chairs and meals. The hall is the place to wait in, a place from which to try the various doors, not a place to live in.¹

One of the best ways to read and understand what James Leo Garrett Jr. has done with his *Baptist Theology: A Four Century Study*² is to see him as one standing at the door to a room marked “The Baptist Tradition,” holding the door open and beckoning you, as a friend, to enter. For in that room there are fires and chairs and meals. And Garrett does not mind if you are not a Baptist! In fact, the more who would like to come in and have a look around and visit about Baptist Theology, the better. In one way, this idea of Garrett as a Doorman for the study of Baptist Theology best depicts his rich and full life of scholarship and churchmanship. And my purpose here, is to show how this exhaustive work, that concludes with the twentieth century, stands as a gift, a Doorman all its own (indeed, if you have seen the size and weight of it, a doorstep!) beckoning twenty-first century Baptists and Christian friends, to enter. Garrett’s door still functions well and is open.

The title of this article is “An Assessment of a Magnum Opus: James Leo Garrett Jr.’s ‘Baptist Theology’ as a Gift to 21st Century Baptists,” but technically Garrett has *manga opera*, the plural of *magnum opus*, for his *Systematic Theology*³ stands on its own as a life work of significant influence. What is more, thanks to the labors of Wyman Lewis Richardson, the multi-volume *Collected Writings* project will stand as well among Garrett’s great works.⁴ A *magnum opus* often is thought of as a pinnacle achievement, a comprehensive and exhaustive work of a lifetime, and the entry point as well as a definitive point for many students and scholars to reference and interact. Garrett’s *Systematic* did that in his own lifetime among his colleagues and students. *Baptist Theology* did that for his student’s students, and continues to serve in that way. And Lord willing, his

¹C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Preface.

²James Leo Garrett Jr., *Baptist Theology: A Four Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009).

³James Leo Garrett Jr., *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990, 1995).

⁴Wyman Lewis Richardson, *The Collected Writings of James Leo Garrett Jr., 1950-2015* (8 vols.; Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2017-). Volumes 1-5 are in print as of the fall of 2022.

Collected Writings will do that for students to come.

Therefore, to provide a brief assessment of *Baptist Theology* is a privilege, for *Baptist Theology* is the text from which I have benefited the most from James Leo Garrett, Jr.

II. BAPTIST THEOLOGY: A REVIEW & ASSESSMENT⁵

John Albert Broadus, calling for the advancement of Baptist theological distinctives in a nineteenth century address, told the story of a United States senator visiting with a friend who casually remarked that he was a Baptist. Curious, the senator asked, “By the way, what kind of Baptists are the Paedobaptists?”

Broadus acknowledged that this account was an exception, even in his day, “but it exemplif[ies] what is really a widespread and very great ignorance as to Baptists.”⁶ If such was the case in 1881, how much more so at the early decades of Baptists’ fifth century, an era in which the rejection of theological heritage is increasingly the norm and few realize that Baptist theology has more to do historically with biblical fidelity than it does with the latest denominational stereotype or scandal. Indeed, the aim of reasserting Baptist doctrine for correcting ignorance is a fitting description of Garrett’s, *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study*—and is one of the volume’s many gifts for twenty-first century Baptists.

1. *A Bifocal Vantage Point: Baptist Theology’s Methodology.* Reflecting on his life’s work in the preface to Volume Two of his *Collected Writings*, Garrett shared, “I have sought to focus both on the Southern Baptists (USA) and upon the entire worldwide Baptist community. This bifocal vantage point was, I think, reflected in my *Baptist Theology: A Four Century Study* (2009).”⁷ This bifocal approach is like one keeping focus on both the tree and the forest, while not overlooking a single leaf, and describes well Garrett’s methodology.

Garrett’s seven-decade contribution to Baptist theological education is well documented and well known. His methodological approach is a descriptive and even-handed encyclopedic assembly

⁵This section is revised and expanded from Jason G. Duesing, *Review of Baptist Theology: A Four Century Study*, by James Leo Garrett Jr., *SBJT* 14, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 92-94.

⁶John A. Broadus, *The Duty of Baptists to Teach Their Distinctive Views* (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1881).

⁷James Leo Garrett Jr., “Preface,” in *The Collected Writings of James Leo Garrett Jr., 1950-2015*, ed. Wyman Lewis Richardson (Searcy, AR: Resource, 2019), 2:xiii.

of both primary and secondary sources, providing the reader an opportunity to form his own opinions. Garrett has often been critiqued as many readers fail to glean the author's own opinion on any given issue. Paul Basden explains that Garrett's writing method's "goal is not to present a finely honed thesis and then to argue and prove that thesis, but to let his readers in on an inter-generational discussion of the cardinal truths of Christianity...so the readers can make up their own minds."⁸ While critique of this method is, in a broad sense, understandable, this critique is not absolute and even in *Baptist Theology* Garrett's obliqueness is not consistently the case. To learn what Garrett believes, one must (1) adapt to Garrett's style of restrained subtlety; and (2) read each and every footnote. Consequently, this assessment, in part, will seek to underscore some of the unique areas where Garrett makes his views known, while summarizing how Garrett's work helps to correct the lack of Baptist theological understanding.

Baptist Theology's stated subtitle, "A Four-Century Study," recognizes the quadricentennial (1609-2009) existence of Baptists. However, Garrett does not give equal treatment to all centuries. Within thirteen chapters of varying lengths, five address the first two centuries, while eight focus on the last two centuries with a predominant emphasis on the twentieth century. The word "study" is central to Garrett's thesis, for he describes the volume as a "study of the doctrinal beliefs of the people called Baptists" and thereby "attempts to treat responsibly each of the four centuries and the Baptists of the world."⁹ Published in 2009, this volume is the culmination of a lifetime of "study." Garrett explained,

In 1950, when I was a very young instructor at Southwestern Seminary, the faculty allowed me to introduce a new elective course in the curriculum called "The History of Baptist Theology." I taught that course at Southwestern during the 50s and again, later, in the 80s and 90s and at Southern Seminary during the 60s and early 1970s. That course involved having students

⁸Paul Basden, "James Leo Garrett Jr." in *The Legacy of Southwestern: Writings that Shaped a Tradition* (North Richland Hills, TX: Smithfield, 2002), 142-43.

⁹Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, xxv.

write papers on many subjects. Then, after my second retirement from teaching in 2003, I began an intensive reading of all these sources and a research project which eventuated in this book.¹⁰

Of note here is the genesis of Garrett's development of his knowledge of Baptist Theology. The course that he started in the 1950s was special. A review of the syllabus for his course offered in the 1959 summer term at Southern Seminary reveals objectives that bear fruit in his 2009 work, and serve as guiding gifts for Baptists today:

1. To afford an opportunity for a study of the historical development of Baptist theology and for a study and evaluation of the concepts peculiar to or emphasized by the Baptists. [Baptist distinctives]
2. To stimulate a clearer understanding of the major doctrinal developments and controversies in Baptist history and of existing differences among Baptists themselves. [Baptist theological development]
3. To encourage the recognition of that which Baptists hold in common with other Christians and the maintenance of proper Christian attitudes toward and relationships with other Christians, churches, and denominations. [Baptist ecumenism]
4. To provide an opportunity for open, honest discussion of problems arising in Baptist doctrine, polity, and practice of issues which Baptists face in the contemporary period. [Baptist polemics]
5. To foster a growing appreciation of the significance of the Baptist movement, its total contribution to Christianity, and its responsibility in today's world. [Baptists and the Christian tradition]
6. To inspire greater fidelity to and consistency with the New Testament message and principles in the contemporary period.¹¹ [Baptist biblicism]

¹⁰Wyman Lewis Richardson, "Baptist Theology with James Leo Garrett, Jr.: An Interview and Review" in *The Collected Writings of James Leo Garrett Jr., 1950-2015*, 1:117.

¹¹James Leo Garrett Jr., *A Bibliographical Syllabus in Baptist Theology* (Fort Worth, TX: Potter's Book Store, 1959), 2. The descriptive summaries in brackets are my own.

Garrett's statement that in 2003 he began "an intensive reading of all the sources," gives a glimpse at his well-known exhaustive research method deployed in *Baptist Theology*, and it was nothing less than what he expected of his students. In Garrett's "History of Baptist Theology" class, he took a unique approach to his course reading list:

No specific reading requirements for this course are prescribed. Each student is expected to read diligently and consistently in the materials listed in the syllabus and in the other materials related to the field, thus immersing himself in the literature of Baptist theology. Failure to engage in such a program of reading during the term shall itself constitute ground for failure to pass the course.¹²

This was, in part, as Robert B. Stewart explains, because "[Garrett] believed that one had no right to write on a subject if one had not read the primary sources in the field thoroughly. Furthermore, not only must one read the relevant material, one must understand it well enough to be able to place it in the context of that particular individual's life's work and able to place his life's work in the broader context of the history of Christian thought."¹³ Stewart also relates the time in class when a student asked question about John Calvin and Garrett, replied, "I believe that I have read everything that John Calvin wrote, and I don't remember anything like that." He read everything John Calvin wrote. Thus, for his *Baptist Theology*, we have a good idea of what he meant by the "intensive reading" he undertook starting in 2003.

At the time of publication, Garrett illuminated further his aim for writing *Baptist Theology*:

No book of this kind, of this nature and scope, on this subject, had ever been written in the history of the Baptists so far as I knew. I did not know when I started that William Brackney would write *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought* and that it would be published in

¹²Garrett, *A Bibliographical Syllabus*, 2.

¹³Robert B. Stewart, "Foreword," in *The Collected Writings of James Leo Garrett Jr., 1950-2015*, 4:x.

2004. I did not know that when I began my book and I'm sure he did not know, when he was writing his, that I would be writing mine. So these are the only two books that have attempted to cover comprehensively Baptist confessions of faith, Baptist theologians, and theological movements and controversies. There have been books on each of those three areas, many books, but only these two on the whole field.¹⁴

In addition to this comprehensive scope, Garrett explained that he sought to consult essential secondary sources in addition to prioritizing the primary sources “to let the authors speak for themselves before I make any assessment of their work.”¹⁵ As secondary sources contain “both favorable and unfavorable, both positive and negative...It’s important to look at those assessments as well as what I would say in interpreting these.”¹⁶ A final important methodological decision for Garrett was his global focus. Noting that neither Brackney or McBeth include the six inhabited continents, Garrett explained that his work with the Baptist World Alliance as well a lifelong reading of Kenneth Scott Latourette’s seven volume *History of the Expansion of Christianity*, compelled him to write a Baptist theology that spanned Baptists around the globe.¹⁷

2. *A Four Century Study: Baptist Theology’s Historical Theology.* Garrett begins *Baptist Theology* with an overview of the roots of Baptist beliefs influenced by the Trinitarian and Christological doctrines of the early Councils and Creeds. He summarizes:

Baptists have consistently affirmed that the canonical Scriptures are always superior to and more authoritative than any or all post biblical tradition. Such a fact does not prevent or preclude evidence that certain of the church fathers ... seemed to have influenced positively the beliefs of later Baptists.¹⁸

¹⁴Garrett, “Baptist Theology with James Leo Garrett, Jr.: An Interview and Review,” 1:117.

¹⁵Garrett, “Baptist Theology with James Leo Garrett, Jr.: An Interview and Review,” 1:118.

¹⁶Garrett, “Baptist Theology with James Leo Garrett, Jr.: An Interview and Review,” 1:118.

¹⁷Garrett, “Baptist Theology with James Leo Garrett, Jr.: An Interview and Review,” 1:118.

¹⁸Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 5.

He then answers the revealing question, “Are Baptists Protestants?” in the affirmative, favoring the key doctrines of the Magisterial Reformers and the Anabaptist kinship approach for any ecclesiological connection between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He asks, “What specific Anabaptist teachings, therefore, can be identified as possibly influencing, even indirectly, the English Baptists?” and lists four:

1. Believer’s baptism as constitutive of a gathered church.
2. Church discipline as necessary to the life of the true church.
3. Elevation of the New Testament over the Old Testament, especially in matters of ecclesiology.
4. Advocacy of religious freedom for all human beings.¹⁹

Garrett’s treatment and categorization of the “soundly biblical” Anabaptists in Switzerland and South Germany are especially helpful when these are today often overlooked or deemphasized.

For Garrett’s study of Baptists’ first and second centuries, he examines the theology of General and Particular Baptists in England and of early Baptists in America. As one example of Garrett’s use of secondary sources, he offers this corrective of William Lumpkin:

Lumpkin’s statement that articles 4-16 [in Helwys’s *A Declaration of Faith*] were a “pioneer statement of the Baptist doctrine of soul competency” may be a reading back into this confession the thought of Edgar Young Mullins at the beginning of the twentieth century.²⁰

Garrett, according to his stated purpose, at times compresses the history to get to the theology, which can make for dense reading. Consider this single sentence covering the life of Hansard Knollys:

The son of a Church of England clergyman in Lincolnshire who himself was ordained at the age of thirty both a deacon and a priest on successive days, Knollys, after studying at Cambridge and becoming

¹⁹Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 15.

²⁰Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 35.

Puritan in his initial Anglican charge, had sojourned in New England as a pastor for three years before joining the JLJ Church and then becoming a Baptist about 1644 and assuming a pastorate in London.²¹

The footnote for this sentence then references the five standard works on Knollys, both well known and obscure.

Garrett makes a point to disclaim the open membership view of John Bunyan,²² and provides a correction that the first Baptist to write a complete systematic theology was Thomas Grantham, not John Gill.²³ He then reclassifies Gill as either a three-fifths or four-fifths Hyper-Calvinist, since he was not an antinomian and not clear on supralapsarianism.²⁴ Garrett also shows the intentional role church discipline played among Philadelphia and Charleston Baptists.²⁵ While Garrett's work is commendably thorough, *Baptist Theology* would have been strengthened by one or two chapters devoted to this understudied era of formative doctrinal advancement—perhaps in lieu of some of the later chapters that parse the twentieth century.

Baptists' third century provides Garrett the opportunity to explore the role and development of Confessions of Faith among Baptists as well as their differing views of soteriology as expressed in Calvinism and Arminianism. Garrett reminds readers that in addition to John Eliot and David Brainerd, William Carey was first influenced by Robert Hall Jr.'s, *Help to Zion's Travellers*.²⁶ Carey's Enquiry, while often thought of as a practical treatise helped "turn Missiology into a theological discipline," and serves as one of the first histories of Christian missions "from the New Testament era until the end of the eighteenth century."²⁷

Whereas Garrett does, at times, compress the history, he does also connect important historical events for the reader that are not widely known. For example, after surveying the life of eighteenth century English pastor Abraham Booth, Garrett concludes by showing how

²¹Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 62.

²²Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 67, n. 83.

²³Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 94, n. 249.

²⁴Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 100.

²⁵Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 118.

²⁶Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 168.

²⁷Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 174-75.

Booth's investment in educational efforts led to the formation of what would become Regent's Park College.²⁸ When reviewing the complicated theological motivations of Daniel Parker, Garrett shows his able knowledge of Ph.D. research citing fresh interpretative analysis of Parker's theology first in 1960 and then the refutation of those conclusions in a 1995 dissertation.²⁹ Likewise, Garrett's balanced and extensive treatment of nineteenth century Landmarkism functions as a readable clarification not only of the negative excesses of the movement, but also of some of the misread characters, such as J. M. Pendleton. He later explains that Landmarkism "was actually an innovation in Baptist ecclesiology."³⁰

Garrett's study of Baptists' fourth century appears in several chapters under a variety of emphases including biblical theologians, Southern Baptist theologians, global Baptist theologians, and new theologians. For all of Garrett's deftness at navigating theological nuance amid infinitesimal detail, at times in this era his description fails to deliver. For example, when speaking of Frank Stagg's denial of the doctrine of the Trinity, Garrett concludes only that Stagg "mistakenly interpreted" and "mistakenly thought."³¹ Garrett tracks the development of theology across all the centuries and notes that with the work of Dale Moody, "Southern Baptist theology came to the espousal of all five tenets of original Arminianism,"³² and that several Southern Baptist theologians increasingly rejected the penal substitution view of the atonement. As a theologian of the twentieth century, Garrett treated eschatology extensively in his own *Systematic Theology* and, therefore, provides a helpful historical note by showing how "[George] Beasley-Murray, George E. Ladd, Dale Moody, John Paul Newport, and others, helped to make historic premillennialism normative for many in Anglo-American Baptist theology during the last half of the twentieth century."³³ Garrett cites the lack of historical evidence to substantiate the rising interest in baptismal sacramentalism.³⁴ He traces the development and influence of dispensationalism

²⁸Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 189.

²⁹Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 206.

³⁰Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 715.

³¹Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 371.

³²Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 382.

³³Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 391.

³⁴Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 543.

but concludes that it is “less destructive to the Baptists” than the modernist movement.³⁵

Garrett’s review of the development of confessions of faith continues with the development of the *Baptist Faith and Message* in 1925, wherein he reviews how the prevalence of theory of evolution led the Southern Baptist Convention to require seminary faculty to sign and to give “assurance of individual acceptance.”³⁶

Garrett’s overview of the “Inerrancy Controversy” in the Southern Baptist Convention is fascinating to read, and as with all items of recent historical occurrence, the reader will no doubt wish Garrett had provided more. Two puzzling items include the four-page treatment of Walter Shurden and his freedom motif of Baptist identity³⁷ located in the middle of the controversy survey and the failure to mention the far more influential work of Russ Bush and Tom Nettles (which does appear in a section on Nettles in a later chapter; Russ Bush, as a Baptist theologian, receives no treatment).

As a member of the first generation who has benefited from the return of the Southern Baptist Convention to conservative theology, this reviewer was disappointed to find that more was not presented regarding the restoration of theological integrity in the SBC seminaries and agencies. Furthermore, Garrett’s survey of the *Baptist Faith and Message* 2000 fails to mention the widespread endorsement and adoption of the capstone confession of the Inerrancy Controversy by all SBC agencies and many state conventions and churches.

One reason Garrett gave for why he wrote *Baptist Theology* remains still a vital reason for many still who read his work today. Garrett noted that people have said that Baptists did not have theologians writing theology. Many said, and still say, that “Theology was only written by Roman Catholics or Lutherans or Anglicans or Presbyterians or somebody else.” But, as Garrett said, “this book is, I think, quite clear evidence that that is not true.”³⁸

3. *A Definitive Work: Baptist Theology’s Reception.* Baptist Theology received several notable reviews that chronicle its early reception in the early twenty-first century. Malcolm B. Yarnell III concluded that

³⁵Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 580.

³⁶Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 448.

³⁷Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 499-502.

³⁸Richardson, *Collected Writings*, 1:119.

Baptist Theology is “the most important text to have been written on the Baptist movement in the last 100 years.”³⁹ He notes that Garrett overlooks the work of Stephen Wright when considering English Particular and General Baptist theology, and does not make the organizational connection between the First London Confession and Calvin’s *Institutes*. Yarnell also commends Garrett for his treatment of controversy among contemporary theologians for “he knew many of the combatants...yet he always attempts to treat them with empathy and accuracy.”⁴⁰

Nathan A. Finn commended *Baptist Theology* when he wrote “Garrett helpfully argues that Baptists have theological roots in multiple movements, regardless of what one believes about Baptists’ historical roots...[And that] there is simply no other work that contains this much information about Baptist historical theology.”⁴¹ He notes that in *Baptist Theology* there is “little effort to synthesize material and/or draw wider implications for Baptist history and thought,” and that while Garrett “says little about Canadian Baptist thinkers and African American Baptist theologians...[t]he sections on Baptist scholars in the two-thirds world are also a helpful contribution to Baptist historical theology.”⁴²

Given all the praise and critique, it is fair to say that perhaps the volume’s greatest omission is the lack of attention paid to the theological contribution of James Leo Garrett Jr. While one would not expect Garrett to include himself, the publisher could have employed an outside author like the ones used in writing the sections on Brazil and South Korea. Perhaps a revised edition of *Baptist Theology* will appear in 2034 that updates the first twenty-five years of Baptists’ fifth century—and adds a section on Garrett’s contribution to the twentieth century? Nevertheless, as a brief aid to fill this void, William H. Brackney’s *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought*, published just a few years before *Baptist Theology*, helps the reader with an assessment of where Garrett, himself, fits in the history of Baptist Theology (as do Paul Basden’s chapters in *The Legacy of Southwestern*⁴³ and

³⁹Malcolm B. Yarnell III, “Review of *Baptist Theology*,” *SWJT* 53, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 223.

⁴⁰Yarnell, “Review of *Baptist Theology*,” 226.

⁴¹Nathan A. Finn, “Review of *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study*,” *Themelios* 34, no. 2 (July 2009): 238.

⁴²Finn, “Review,” 238-39.

⁴³James Leo Garrett Jr., ed., *The Legacy of Southwestern*, 2002.

*Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*⁴⁴, and *Garrett's festschrifts*⁴⁵ and memorials). Brackney presents Garrett as (1) primarily a Southwestern Seminary theologian, (2) someone with a clear appreciation “for the larger world in which Baptists live,” and “a courageous witness for ecumenism,” (3) the successor to A. H. Strong in the second half of the twentieth-century as a Baptist systematic theologian, (4) a theologian with “a cooperative and engaging ecclesiology,” and (5) someone who, “more often than not, after surveying the extant literature on a particular issue, he accepts a predictable position or combines the best of several existing writers.”⁴⁶

4. *An Assessment for 21st Century Baptists: Baptist Theology's Gift*. Garrett concludes *Baptist Theology* with a statement of uncertainty about the future, asking whether Baptists today “hold to and clearly affirm and practice their distinctives” in an era where Baptist ecclesiology has “come into a state of comparative neglect or assumed irrelevance.”⁴⁷ Such describes the state of Baptists at the start of their fifth century as Yarnell notes that with this concluding statement Garrett, “has prophetically framed the contemporary question from the perspective of a grand historical-theological narrative.”⁴⁸ The idea that James Leo Garrett Jr.'s *Baptist Theology: A Four Century Study* might serve as a prophetic guide is one of the main gifts this volume gives to twenty-first century Baptists. At a base level, it, at the very least, provides professors, pastors, missionaries, and students a tool to combat what Broadus termed a “very great ignorance as to Baptists.”⁴⁹ At a more intricate level Baptist Theology serves and prepares readers to answer recurring theological questions, many of which Garrett, himself, foresaw. In an article Garrett wrote in 2010, not long after the publication of *Baptist Theology*, he asks what issues of the past will have a bearing on the future and surmises:

⁴⁴Timothy George and David S. Dockery, eds., *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition* (Nashville: B&H, 2001).

⁴⁵See *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 33, no. 1 (2006), and Paul A. Basden and David S. Dockery, eds., *The People of God: Essays on the Believers' Church* (Nashville: Broadman, 1991).

⁴⁶William H. Brackney, *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2004), 425-27.

⁴⁷Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 725-726.

⁴⁸Yarnell, *SWJT*, 226.

⁴⁹John A. Broadus, *The Duty of Baptists to Teach Their Distinctive Views* (Macon, GA: Ragsdale, 1943).

1. Concerns about the relationship between humanity and the divine will continue to resurface because Baptists connect salvation with church membership.
2. Issues surrounding revelation and the Bible, Christology, human origins, and eschatology are likely to resurface.
3. Baptists may continue to be less effective in teaching and fleshing out their historic distinctives amid their own people. [Baptist distinctives]
4. Baptists may continue to rediscover their debt to the patristic consensus and to recognize their debt to the Magisterial Reformation and the Radical Reformation. [Baptists and the Christian tradition]
5. Perhaps the question of interdenominational Christian unity will be answered in different ways in the 21st century than in the 20th. [Baptist ecumenism]
6. It is very probable that the interactions of Missiology and theology among Baptists will markedly increase.⁵⁰

What is remarkable about these characterizing issues Garrett listed in 2010 is their similarity to his course objectives for his 1950s Baptist Theology syllabus—what he saw then as questions the study of Baptist Theology could answer, he still saw the study of Baptist Theology fulfilling sixty years later.

In that same 2010 essay, Garrett then asks these questions of twenty-first century Baptists:

1. Can Baptists in various conventions and unions find a common biblical hermeneutic, especially in reference to contemporary social and moral issues?
2. Is the Baptist embrace of the doctrine of the Trinity sufficient for an effective witness to Muslims?
3. Can Baptists agree on the destiny of the unevangelized?
4. What are Baptists to do with Dispensationalism?
5. Are many Baptist churches to adopt ruling elders? Will Baptist megachurches retain a residue of congregational polity?
6. Are Baptists to surrender or retain believer's baptism by

⁵⁰James Leo Garrett Jr., "The Future of Baptist Theology With A Look At Its Past," *JBTM* 7, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 75.

immersion and its implications?

7. Can Baptists mend their fractured unity?⁵¹

Perhaps not all these questions land in 2022 the way they did in his mind in 2010, but several of them are descriptive of the very challenges twenty-first century Baptists are facing. Garrett concludes, “[I]t is of paramount importance that Baptists in the twenty-first century think theologically as Baptists and in reference to the Baptist heritage. I invite and challenge you to engage in Baptist theology and to make your contribution to it.”⁵²

III. CONCLUSION: OPENING THE DOOR

I never had Garrett as a professor. I came to Southwestern for my Ph.D. studies right at the time he started his “intensive reading” for *Baptist Theology*. I had read of the shirts students at Southwestern had made decades before, “I survived Theo with Leo,” and of his legacy as a lecturer as “Machine-Gun Garrett.” His peers recognized him as “the most knowledgeable Baptist theologian living today.”⁵³ He was known, as the *Christian Century* noted, as the “dean of Southern Baptist theologians.”⁵⁴ Garrett served as my professor’s mentor, Malcolm B. Yarnell III, and thus, early in my studies, I ventured to ask Garrett if he would guide me in a directed study Ph.D. seminar covering the Baptist Theologians, thinking it would be ideal to study with him while he wrote that volume. My request landed on him like Sanballat and Gresham calling up to Nehemiah on the wall, and Garrett’s response was the same, “I am doing a great work and cannot come down” (Neh 6:3). Though that door of formal study with Garrett was closed, it led to my discovery of two meaningful and longer-lasting ways that he would serve as a Door Opener for me to the Baptist Tradition.

On social media, in recent months, there was a trend of students tracing their intellectual “family tree” by tracing their professor’s professor, and their professor’s professors. Through Garrett’s student and my professor, Yarnell, I learned, not even realizing it at

⁵¹Garrett, “The Future of Baptist Theology,” 75-79.

⁵²Garrett, “The Future of Baptist Theology,” 80.

⁵³George and Dockery, *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, 298.

⁵⁴“Influential Baptist Theologian James Leo Garret Jr. dies at 94,” *The Christian Century* (February 24, 2020).

first, the Garrett method of methodical and careful scholarship, as well as receiving a challenging (and encouraging) push toward excellence in researching Baptist theology for the glory of God and his church. In addition to the gift of his student as my professor, I read *Baptist Theology* as soon as it was published. Having access to Garrett's magnum opus is better than having one seminar with him. I consult it regularly and it became the standard text I used when teaching the Baptist theologians Ph.D. seminar at Southwestern and in the new "Baptist Tradition" Ph.D. seminar I started when I arrived at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and continue to teach today. Therein, a new generation of students are meeting James Leo Garrett Jr. and are finding him standing at the door of the room labeled "The Baptist Tradition" and welcoming them as friends, to enter. For as C. S. Lewis said, in that room, there are fires and chairs and meals—good gifts of instruction and help for twenty-first century Baptists.



LESSONS JAMES LEO GARRETT TAUGHT ME ABOUT LIFE, SCHOLARSHIP, AND THEOLOGY

Robert B. Stewart*

Several professors and scholars have positively influenced my life. Among those that must be named are former Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary professors John Newport, Steve Lemke, Bert Dominy, Millard Erickson, Tommy Lea, and Curtis Vaughan, as well as others beyond Southwestern like Tom Wright, Alister McGrath, Gary Habermas—and quite unexpectedly—John Dominic Crossan. But nobody has been as instrumental in my life as a student and professor as James Leo Garrett Jr.

God used Garrett to change the course of my life. When I began my studies at Southwestern in 1986, I had no intention of earning a doctorate of any sort, much less becoming a professor. Garrett's impact on me was a major influence in redirecting my perception of God's plan for my life. I first met Garrett at a party for the staff of Roberts Library of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, which I attended because my wife, Marilyn, worked with his wife, Myrta, in the serials department of the library. I recall several student workers whispering as they spoke of him as if in awe. After he introduced himself to me, I found myself wondering why they were seemingly so intimidated by such a sweet man. At that point, I had yet to take a course with him. I would soon learn the reason.

Gentleman is a word that comes to mind when thinking of Garrett. One lesson Garrett taught me is that you can retain your convictions without having to destroy those whose convictions differ from your own. On Wednesday morning, March 9, 1994, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary President Russell Dilday was fired by

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the trustees of the seminary. The attitude of most of the students and faculty was one of anger and dismay. Some, however, were jubilant and triumphant. Nobody seemed to have moderate feelings on the matter. I remember well Garrett's message to us that afternoon in our Ph.D. seminar on the theology of Augustine. He said that it was a moment of profound grief for him and encouraged us to trust in God. Then he put his head in his hands and began to weep. No anger, no triumphalism, no attacks on anyone's character. We prayed together and then left because at that point none of us was emotionally capable of spending three hours discussing Augustinian theology. This depth of character and well of concern coupled with his refusal to attack anyone regardless of their position on a controversial matter led to Garrett being held in high esteem by those on both sides of our denominational controversy.

Garrett believed in me before I believed in myself. He caught me off guard when he called me aside on the final day of my systematic theology course and offered me the opportunity to grade for him. Perhaps no student in the history of Southwestern was ever more overjoyed to enter a period of indentured servitude. Observing how he went about the task of Christian scholarship and instruction was a blessing for which I will forever be grateful to God.

Another lesson he taught me was that you should not separate academics from discipleship. A revealing memory I have from my time as his grader is of him calling me into his office and telling me how disappointed he was with how one of his theology classes had performed on a midterm exam. It was as though he held himself responsible for their poor performance. He understood his role as a professor as one of academic discipleship. I was stunned when he asked my advice as to how he could responsibly bring their grades up on the final, and extremely pleased when he considered a suggestion of mine and adapted the final exam to implement it. His primary concern was to teach to the best of his ability, not to lord it over lowly students. This brings to mind 2 Timothy 2:2, where Paul states: "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." In that one verse there are four generations of believers:

Generation 1: Paul

Generation 2: Timothy (and others)

Generation 3: The faithful men Timothy would teach, and
Generation 4: Timothy's disciples who would teach others.

I am always pleased when I see my former students teaching, publishing, or presenting in academic conferences, in addition to ministering to and through the local church. A scholar's legacy is not only written in books and articles, it is also passed on through the lives of his students. If a professor's work is only inscribed in literature, it has been aborted. It must be passed on and incarnated in the lives of those he taught.

Reflecting on those days when I first began to think that perhaps God was leading me to pursue a doctorate, I recall being not only surprised to find myself at such a point—when I came to Southwestern, I had no intention of doing so—but also lacking confidence that I would be able to complete the course. My journey into and through the program was thus a pilgrimage that proceeded in one-step increments. I told myself that I would take the Graduate Record Exam (GRE), and if I didn't make the required score, that would be a word from God that I should not pursue a doctoral degree. I would take the entrance exam, and if I were not accepted, then I would know that God had other plans for my life. Step-by-step I traveled through the process. Each step of the way was one of faith. Yet my faith was mingled with doubt. Some might find it odd to read of faith mingled with doubt, but doubt is not the opposite of faith; unbelief is the opposite of faith. My doubt was not in God—I knew that if God were calling me into the doctoral program, then he would sustain me in it. My doubt was in myself; I feared that it was my flesh, working through my pride that was driving me where God was not leading me. Ultimately, the reason that I applied for admittance into the program in the first place was that as a result of studying with Leo Garrett I came home every day from class eager to read more and to study theology more deeply. Eventually, I realized that I would be reading the same books and studying the same topics even if I were not a Ph.D. student. I also came to realize that a doctorate in theology was not the goal of my life and ministry, but rather the means by which I would conduct my ministry and seek to glorify God. Such was the impact that James Leo Garrett, Jr. had on my life; with or without a terminal degree I knew that for the rest of my life I would be a student of theology.

Professor Garrett reinforced in my life the importance of the local church. Too many scholars are prone to isolation; they insulate themselves from the outside world, even from the local church. Such was never Garrett's practice. At heart he was a true Baptist, and as a Baptist he was committed to the local church in practice as well as in theory. For Garrett the local church was the instrument through which God would change the world by making disciples and sending out ministers and missionaries to fulfill our Lord's Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). So I was not overly surprised when in 1995, over lunch at an associational Sunday School training conference, he informed me that he and Myrta were now part of a church plant led by a pastor ten years *my* junior. He shared excitedly about the joy he received from teaching a Bible study for young couples. For this reason and more it was appropriate that the festschrift for him—edited by Paul Basden and David S. Dockery, is entitled *The People of God: Essays on the Believers' Church*.¹ Simply put, Garrett believed that to be a Baptist scholar one must be active in a local church, not simply affirm the local church in one's theology of the church.

For all these reasons and many more, I owe a debt to Garrett that I hope to repay in part through my own teaching ministry. God willing, this article will be one small payment on that debt. These are some of the life lessons that Garrett taught me, but he also taught me much about how to conduct a ministry of scholarship. Allow me to share some of those lessons.

I. READ THE PRIMARY SOURCES

Every student in every class taught by Garrett was challenged; they were also blessed. His knowledge of all the subjects on which he taught was voluminous and precise. When he lectured it seemed like he did not need to stop to catch his breath, hence his nickname of "Gatling Gun Garrett." But the feeling that I had as a student under him was not one of fear or intimidation but instead one of respect and inspiration. I remember a day in the course systematic theology 2 when a student asked a question that started with, "Didn't Calvin say...?" Garrett's answer to the student was, "I believe that I

¹Paul Basden and David S. Dockery, *The People of God: Essays on the Believers' Church* (Nashville: Broadman, 1991). A second festschrift in Garrett's honor was published in the spring 2006 issue of *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, the journal of the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion.

have read everything that John Calvin wrote, and I don't remember anything like that." I thought to myself, "You've read everything that John Calvin wrote?" It was an atmosphere of unrelenting precision and thoroughness that one breathed from studying with Garrett. Arguably the most difficult classes I had at Southwestern were with Garrett; there is no doubt, however, that his classes required the most reading. He believed that one had no right to write on a subject if one had not thoroughly read the primary sources in the field.

II. HISTORY MATTERS

One must not only read the relevant material, but one must also place it within the context of that particular writer's life and culture, as well as the broader historical context of Christian thought. Garrett consistently provided the life dates of those he referred to in parentheses. In this way, his two-volume *Systematic Theology* not only serves to situate doctrines into their respective categories, but also to place significant thinkers related to particular doctrines into their respective eras in the development of the doctrine being considered. In some ways Garrett's *Systematic* is as useful as a sourcebook, or starting point, for deeper research on a doctrine as it is as a systematic treatise.

III. EVERY DOCTRINE MUST BE TESTED AND SUPPORTED BY SCRIPTURE

All evangelical theologians give lip service to this truth, but this is easier done in theory than in practice—especially when the doctrine being discussed is one which tends to stir the emotions.

The question of the destiny of the unevangelized serves to offer an example of how he allowed the authority of Scripture to dictate how he would handle what is for many a controversial issue. Fair-minded scholars have taken differing positions on this question, some being inclined to soteriological exclusivism, others to inclusivism, and still others to universalism, to name only a few broad positions on a spectrum.² While respecting each person's right to hold one's own view on the matter, and seeking to understand their reasons

²For a more extensive, though still not all-inclusive sampling of positions presently held on the matter, see Robert B. Stewart, "Can Only One Religion Be True? Surveying the Answers," in *Can Only One Religion Be True?: Paul Knitter and Harold Netland in Dialogue*, ed. Robert B. Stewart (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 1-16.

for doing so, Garrett understood the matter as one of what the Bible permitted us to teach, and put it thus:

We have no permission to tell the Muslim, Buddhist, or Hindu that he/she can be reconciled to God through a savior other than Jesus. We have no mandate to tell any human that the *Logos* for certain apart from any gospel story will eternally save him. . . . We have no right to say what God in his free and sovereign grace can or cannot do, or will or will not do, in freely bestowing and lavishing his grace. But our proclamation must be clear: Jesus is the only Savior of humanity!³

I recognize myself as somewhat of a theological amphibian in that I teach in two fields: philosophy and theology. As a class philosophers are prone to speculate about matters that Scripture does not directly address. For this reason, I am grateful for his commitment to biblical authority because I am regularly reminded that although philosophical speculation is often theologically profitable, it must never go against the clear teaching of the Bible.

But the clear teaching of Scripture only comes from good hermeneutical practices. Together, Garrett, John Newport, and Bert Dominy led me to see that hermeneutical questions were of fundamental importance in theology. My dissertation was on the intersection of contemporary hermeneutics and historical Jesus research.⁴ I investigated how the hermeneutical presuppositions of those searching for the historical Jesus influenced how they understood Jesus as a figure in history. I looked closely at the Jesus research of two very different scholars: John Dominic Crossan and N. T. Wright. Both have written widely on hermeneutics and also on the historical Jesus. I asked a series of hermeneutical questions concerning the work of both men—and shared my answers with each of them to see if I accurately portrayed them—and found out that I did. My

³James Leo Garrett Jr., “Should Southern Baptists Adopt the Synod of Dort?” *The Collected Writings of James Leo Garrett Jr. 1950–2015*, ed. Wyman Lewis Richardson (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2018), 2:191.

⁴Robert B. Stewart, *The Quest of the Hermeneutical Jesus: The Impact of Hermeneutics on the Jesus Research of John Dominic Crossan and N. T. Wright* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008).

questions were: (1) What is a text? (2) What is the role of a reader? (3) What counts as a legitimate reading of a text? and (4) What is the relationship between Jesus and history? Then I traced out how their respective answers to those questions influenced their answers to a set of questions concerning Jesus: (1) Who did Jesus believe himself to be? (2) What was Jesus' message? (3) Why did Jesus die and was he raised from the dead? (4) What is the relationship between Jesus and the church? and (5) What is the relationship between Jesus and the Gospels?⁵

What was confirmed to me throughout this time was the fourth lesson that Garrett taught me—first, as a result of grading Cult Theology for him—and then when he turned that course over to me.

IV. THE IMPORTANCE OF WORLDVIEWS

1. *Theology is an exercise in worldview thinking.* Just as worldviews are fundamental to human life—they are like navels; everybody has one—worldviews are fundamental to the task of theology. Every worldview tells a story that is about each of us individually, all of us taken together, and life as a whole. Human beings are story-telling creatures. After serving as a pastor for over two decades, I never cease to be amazed at how quickly my sermon points are forgotten, yet how well stories about my family and personal experiences are remembered.

Worldview stories will answer five questions:⁶

- (1) Who am I?
- (2) Where am I?
- (3) What's wrong?
- (4) What's the solution?
- (5) What time is it (in the story the worldview is telling)?⁷

Note well: a supposed worldview that does not answer these questions is not a worldview, however much one would protest to the contrary.

⁵In actuality I posed six questions of Crossan and Wright concerning Jesus because question three (Why did Jesus die and was he raised from the dead?) is a compound question.

⁶N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 138, 467-72.

⁷The fifth question, "What time is it?" is not really a "what" question at all; it is a "where" question. But it is a where question that is asking for a chronological rather than a geographical location, i.e., that is asking, "Where in the flow of cosmic history, i.e., the worldview story, am I?" rather than "Where in the world am I?" or "What time does the clock say it is?" or "What is the date on the calendar?"

Christian theologians consider questions like these:

- Who is God, and what is God like (theology proper)?
- How should I understand the natural world (creation)?
- Who am I (anthropology)?
- What's wrong with the World (hamartiology)?
- Who is Jesus (person of Christ)?
- What did Jesus do (work of Christ)?
- Who is the Holy Spirit, and what does he do (pneumatology)?
- What does it mean to know God/be saved (soteriology)?
- How should I live in my faith community and the world (ecclesiology)?
- When and how will God ultimately fix what's wrong in the world (eschatology)?

2. *The task of the Christian theologian is to tell a story that weaves the answers to all these questions into a coherent whole.* Theologians should tell a story about God and creation (where am I?), about humanity (who am I?), about sin (what is wrong with the world?), about Christ, salvation, the Holy Spirit, and eschatology (what has God done, what is he doing, and what will he do to set the world right?), and do so in such a way that we can find our place, both historically and existentially, in God's story (what time is it?).

When theology is done without a concern for the big story that worldviews express, the result is a collection of disconnected scenes of theological content, but the story as a whole is unresolved and, at best, only partially satisfying. In fact, even when the pieces themselves are for the most part true, we are still left asking this question: "So what?" Meaning and purpose remain elusive apart from a worldview.

3. *There is also a symbolic aspect to worldviews.* Symbols capture our shared experience in a form that communicates the stories in a glance. Symbols need not be visual, although frequently they are. Symbols must, however, summarize the story, or key points in the story, and the answers to the questions that are supplied in the story, or at its most important moments, into a sign, a ritual, or a relevant expression. We communicate our most important beliefs through symbols.

For example, the ring on my left hand is a symbol that tells the world that I belong to my wife, Marilyn, and only to her, as long as we both are alive. This ring is not my marriage, but it reminds me, and informs anyone with eyes to see, that I am a married man living in a covenant relationship.

Understanding symbols should not be difficult for a culture in which everyone has a smart phone. We do not read through a list of titles of digital applications to use our phones; we simply glance at a screen populated with icons—symbols—that picture what the function of the respective app is. On Facebook we enjoy stories of significant events in the lives of our friends, such as births, weddings, graduations, promotions, and other milestones, by sifting through a series of pictures—symbols—that communicate the essence of these events in a glance.

Jesus gave his disciples two monumentally important symbols in the Lord's Supper and Baptism—rituals that communicate the heart of the Christian story, crucifixion, and resurrection—in visual rather than verbal form.

4. *The doctrine of the atonement is an ideal theological subject to demonstrate what I mean.* For Christians, the cross is, after all, the crux of the matter (no pun intended). But doesn't the fact that the cross is at the center of the Christian story seem, if I may say so, a bit odd?

Does it not seem odd that Paul came to Corinth resolved not to preach the greatness of God, or the law of God, or even the love of God, but rather the crucifixion of Jesus, a messianic claimant who had been brutally killed like so many other "messiahs" before him? Does it not seem odd that near the end of his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote, "For what I received I passed on to you *as of first importance*: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures"?⁸ What of the sort of death that Jesus died? Crucifixion, one of the lowest forms of death in the ancient Greco-Roman world—so low that Roman citizens were almost never crucified!⁹ Crucifixion was

⁸1 Corinthians 15:3. Emphasis added. Many have thought that this section is a creed, or ecclesial formula of the early church. If this is the case, then the oddness of the claim is heightened even more by the fact that the early church from the first proclaimed the death of their leader.

⁹Cicero refers to a Roman citizen, one Publius Gavius, being crucified by Verres in *In Verrem* 2.5.63. The fact that this is mentioned in a speech by Cicero against Verres at the trial of Verres indicates that it possibly was illegal. (Any conclusions drawn from this must be made with the awareness that Cicero was the consummate politician.) Thanks to Simon Gathercole for pointing

a notoriously inefficient form of execution, nevertheless it was a powerfully effective form of intimidation. Not only did victims of crucifixion die a humiliating and excruciating death, they were frequently denied a proper burial.¹⁰ In a culture where the majority of the religions had strict guidelines for what to do with a body after death, it was Rome's way of saying, "not only can we kill you in a very dehumanizing fashion, we can also ruin your hereafter." Crucifixion was in effect a declaration: "You may choose your preferred deity but remember this: Caesar is Lord!" Yet Jesus turned this declaration on its head by dying on a cross and then rising from the dead, as if to say, "Is that the worst you can do?" As a result, his disciples boldly proclaimed that Jesus, not Caesar, was Lord by celebrating his crucifixion! Does that not seem odd?

Does it not seem odd that the *earliest apostolic teaching on the atonement was performative, rather than propositional*? Simply put, Jesus's earliest disciples were engaging in atonement theology every time they took the Lord's Supper.

Before any of the Gospels were written, before any book of the New Testament was penned, even before Paul's Damascus Road experience, Christians regularly met and engaged in a ritual meal filled with atonement metaphors. Furthermore, if one takes the breaking of bread mentioned in Acts 2:42 and 46 to be references to the Lord's Supper, then Luke tied the presence and power of the Spirit to the Eucharist equally as much as he did the Spirit's power to apostolic teaching and conversions. The Lord's Supper was practiced from the birth of the Church.

Furthermore, in 1 Corinthians 11:23, Paul stresses that he and Jesus taught the same thing concerning the meal, when he states: "I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you . . ." ¹¹ Perhaps, then, the place to start in understanding the atonement is

me to this outlier.

¹⁰For an informative essay on post-crucifixion burial of Jews being a somewhat frequent exception, see Craig A. Evans, "Getting the Burial Traditions and Evidences Right," in *How God Became Jesus: The Real Origins of Belief in Jesus' Divine Nature—A Response to Bart D. Ehrman*, ed. Michael F. Bird (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 71-93. It is not insignificant that for Jews crucifixion, dying on a tree, was enough to curse the victim (Deut 21:22-23; Gal 3:13).

¹¹There is a disagreement over whether or not the words, "I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you," mean that Paul had some direct revelation concerning the Lord's Supper or whether he meant that Jesus taught Peter and others this, and then they instructed Paul. In either case, Jesus would be the authoritative source of the teaching.

the Lord's Supper, the worldview symbol that Jesus gave us.¹²

Disconnected from the Lord's Supper, reflection on the atonement easily falls into the trap of dueling theories. Theories may be useful as heuristic devices so long as we remember that they are shorthand terms for ease of reference, not first-order theological statements. We should never make the mistake of thinking that arriving at the meaning of Christ's death is a simple matter of comparing, contrasting, and choosing between "theories," like choosing one flavor out of many at an ice cream shop.¹³ To my knowledge, no pre-enlightenment theologian ever spoke of his teaching on the cross as a "theory." Instead, they professed what they understood Scripture to teach concerning the significance of Jesus's death.

The theology present in the Lord's Supper may have been the reason that the early church, to say nothing of the earliest church, apparently thought that the work of Christ was clear but that the person of Christ was mysterious! Council after council addressed the Son's nature and constitution, yet no ecumenical council dealt primarily with Christ's work. Perhaps the reason the Fathers did not address the work of Christ was not because they were clear on it but rather that there simply was not much controversy where it was concerned. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and they celebrated Christ's reconciling work in the practice of the Lord's Supper.

At the end of the day, when we consider the cross of Jesus, we are faced with a mystery that is too great to be fully comprehended but one that may be apprehended.¹⁴ We cannot entirely understand what God has done for us through the cross because of our human limitations. Such a thing is to be expected, however; why should we expect fully to comprehend what God does when we know that we cannot understand fully who God is?¹⁵

¹²For a significantly fuller development of the ideas presented in this essay, see N. T. Wright, Simon Gathercole, and Robert B. Stewart, *What Did the Cross Accomplish? A Conversation about the Atonement* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2021), 1-19.

¹³A systematic theology text that is limited in terms of space must survey theories of both the atonement and the Lord's Supper rather than holistically present them. This is understandable given the introductory nature of a systematic theology course. For a brief annotated bibliography of works on the atonement see Wright, *What Did the Cross Accomplish?*, 91-102.

¹⁴Comprehension is understanding a matter in detail. Apprehension is simply to understand that a matter is true. It is the difference between understanding how and that.

¹⁵Here I am affirming something consistent with Calvin's idea of divine condescension. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (London: James Clarke, 1962),

The Lord's Supper prompts Jesus's disciples to reflect on the cross, where we see both God's holiness and his love. At the cross, God's glory and grace meet. Perhaps what we need most is not comprehension but rather participation in this glorious ritual that Jesus gave us. At least I know this: when I take the Eucharist, I am truly grateful. Perhaps the best response is not theology, but rather doxology. Maybe Isaac Watts's classic hymn says best where our doctrine of the atonement should end.

When I survey the wondrous cross
 On which the Prince of glory died,
 My richest gain I count but loss,
 And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
 Save in the death of Christ my God!
 All the vain things that charm me most,
 I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,
 Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
 Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
 Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
 That were a present far too small;
 Love so amazing, so divine,
 Demands my soul, my life, my all.¹⁶



1.13.1.

¹⁶Watts simply says that awe, humility, and devotion are proper responses to the cross, which I cannot imagine any Christian denying.

“MUNUS TRIPLEX OF THE TRINITY”: The Father as the Proper Potentate, the Spirit as the Permanent Prophet, and the Son as the Perpetual Priest: Trinity and Priesthood in the Thought of James Leo Garrett Jr.¹

Peter L. H. Tie*

Systematic theologians of almost all confessions often explicate Jesus’ works through the theological notion of *munus triplex*; namely, the Son performs the threefold function of potentate, prophet, and priest. James Leo Garrett Jr. rightly observes,

In treating the doctrine of the work of Christ, numerous theologians have utilized as an organizing pattern the “threefold office” (*munus triplex*) of Christ, namely, as Prophet, Priest, and King. The concept of the threefold office is traceable to Eusebius of Caesarea (c.263-c.330), but the Protestant Reformers made its usage commonplace. Among the theologians who have employed the threefold office have been John Calvin, John L. Dagg, Charles Hodge, James P. Boyce, A. H. Strong, Theodor Haering, Emil Brunner, Dale Moody, Bruce Milne, and Millard Erickson.²

¹This article is dedicated to the late James Leo Garrett Jr. who inspired me to research further into the doctrine of Christ and Christian priesthood.

²James L. Garrett Jr., *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical and Evangelical*, 4th ed. (2 vols.; North Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL, 2011; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 1:608-9. Other more recent theologians who follow the threefold pattern are: Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 767-72; Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 483-547; John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R 2013), 899-910.

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Garrett himself, however, "does not use the threefold office as an organizing pattern" for his study of the work of Christ; he, nonetheless, "treat[s] as titles and functions of Jesus's prophethood, priesthood, and kingship."³ It is appropriate to say that Christ's multifaceted work cannot be fairly and fully captured in the traditional concept of *munus triplex*, but one cannot adequately describe the work of Christ without at least taking the concept into account. Garrett does not ignore *munus triplex* altogether, especially when it relates to the priesthood of all believers. Garrett states clearly,

The Servant songs or poems and Isa. 61 embody the "kingdom of priests" motif and afford a transition to the New Testament doctrines of the high priesthood of Jesus and the priesthood of all Christians. Returning Israelites are called "priests of the LORD" and "ministers of our God" (Isa. 61: 6, RSV, NIV), and the Servant of the Lord has prophetic (Isa. 49: 2 a; 50: 4-5), royal (Isa. 49: 7; 52:13, 15), and priestly or sacrificial (Isa. 53: 3-12) functions.⁴

For Garrett, "The pattern of the Suffering Servant [in the Book of Isaiah] becomes the pattern of the priesthood of Christ; the pattern of the High Priest determines the pattern of the priesthood of all Christians."⁵ I recapitulate here Garrett's focus on Christ's and Christian priesthood:

³Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, 1:609. Adam Harwood aptly observes, "James Leo Garrett Jr. also does not use this threefold structure. Instead, his major section titled 'The Person of Jesus Christ' surveys fourteen biblical titles and functions of Jesus Christ. Material is sprinkled throughout the chapters on Jesus as a prophet, high priest, and king." Adam Harwood, *Christian Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Systematic* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2022), 464.

⁴Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, 2:606-7.

⁵Peter L. Tie, *Restore Unity, Recover Identity, and Refine Orthopraxy: The Believers' Priesthood in the Ecclesiology of James Leo Garrett Jr.* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 13. At the outset of the chapter on "Ministry of Churches," Garrett has already laid out the framework by quoting S. F. Winward that the threefold pattern of Christ is the threefold pattern of the church: "Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the essential form of the Church. It is from his person and work, his mission and ministry, that the Church receives her structure and pattern... Jesus Christ is the king in the form of a servant, and the Church is therefore diakonia... Christ is the prophet-apostle and the church is mission. He is the high priest, and his body the Church is a royal priesthood" (Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, 2:603); see S. F. Winward, "The Church in the New Testament," in *The Pattern of the Church: A Baptist View*, ed. A. Gilmore (London: Lutterworth, 1963), 54-55.

[T]he doctrine of the universal priesthood is based on, though not identical with, the person and work of the High Priest, Jesus Christ, who is the only perfect and effective mediator opening once and for all the access for sinners to God and who also becomes the fundamental pattern for the church and its ministry... Christians are not to offer propitiatory or expiatory sacrifices, the works Christ has accomplished perfectly and effectively, but are to follow the pattern Christ the High Priest has set for church, i.e., the prophetic, priestly, and princely servanthood (*diakonia*).⁶

There are three relevant points worth mentioning here: first, the priesthood of Christ and Christians are comparable, and yet distinct in certain aspects; second, the priesthood of Christ seems to encompass his prophetic, priestly, and kingly ministry; third, the priesthood and the threefold function of Christ have become the pattern of Christian priesthood, which includes the prophetic, priestly, and kingly ministry of the Church.

Garrett interchanges terms (i.e., between the priesthood of Christ and his threefold ministry; between the priesthood of Christians and threefold ministry of the church) in a way that is common among theologians. Garrett quotes T. F. Torrance to support such interchangeability:

The conception of the Suffering Servant is the great characteristic of the Church's ministry, and it is that which above all determines the nature of priesthood in the Church. That applies to the Church's threefold participation in Christ's Prophetic, Priestly, and Kingly Ministry, for the Church is engaged in all these as servant bearing the cross like the man of Cyrene (Mat. 27:32). It is indeed in terms of the suffering servant ministry that we are to see the basic unity in the church's prophetic, priestly, and kingly functions.⁷

⁶Tie, *Restore Unity, Recover Identity, and Refine Orthopraxy*, 16-17.

⁷Quoted by Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, 2:607. See Thomas F. Torrance, "Royal Priesthood," *Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers*, no. 3 (Edinburgh, London: Oliver and Boyd, 1955), 87.

This ambiguity between Christ's priesthood and his threefold ministry, and/or between the Christian priesthood and threefold church ministry seems to not only create confusion in the ministerial role of Christians and church, but also result in the conflation of the distinct roles (functions) of the Trinity. The latter is the primary concern of this article attempting to answer the question, "If the Son plays all the major roles of king, prophet, and priest, then are the roles of the Father and the Spirit distinct from that of the Son within the Godhead and in relation to his creation?"

The theology of Oneness Pentecostalism has entirely done away with the three distinct persons; it claims that Jesus is the one God who plays all three roles or identities comprehensively, though at different periods of time throughout salvation history.⁸ In short, Jesus has it all and has done it all; the Trinity is not necessary. On the other hand, the traditional doctrine of the Trinity emphasizes that the Father and the Spirit are actively involved in all of Christ's works in this *equal* Trinitarian relationship (i.e., equal in divine essence, as well as equally involved in all divine functions). Thus, the acts of the Trinity in relation to creation are indivisible. This statement, though consistent with the unity of the Trinity, obscures the distinctions of roles between the Father, Son, and Spirit.⁹ Thiselton rightly asks, "If the mission of the Holy Spirit is indistinguishable from that of Christ, might the Spirit then become an obscure, even shadowy, figure virtually overshadowed by the visible and public ministry of Jesus Christ, and by the Father's 'sending' of the Son?"¹⁰

The Father, Son, and Spirit *do* possess the same essence and attributes, but the only biblical way of knowing their distinction is by differentiating their roles. Grudem points out that "if there are no differences among them eternally, then how does one person differ from the other? They would no longer be Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but rather Person A, Person A, and Person A, each identical to the other not only in being but also in role and in the way they

⁸Gregory A. Boyd, *Oneness Pentecostals and the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 25-48. For Oneness Pentecostalism, Boyd explains, "The first biblical truth is that *there is only one God*, and the second is that *Jesus Christ is God*. From these two truths, Oneness groups deduce that Jesus Christ is God in his totality, and therefore that Jesus must himself be the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" (26).

⁹Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 475.

¹⁰Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit—in Biblical Teaching, through the Centuries, and Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 461.

relate to one another.”¹¹ Unfortunately, the traditional expression of Jesus’s *munus triplex* contributes, intentionally or unintentionally, to the neglect of the distinct divine roles of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in relational, redemptive, and revelatory matters. If the Father, Son, and Spirit are considered to carry out all their functions indiscriminately (i.e., without a distinct order of roles), subsequent logical, though unscriptural, arguments may emerge, such as, “the Father died on the cross,” “the Father obeyed the Son,” or “the Spirit sent the Father.”¹² Conservative or evangelical theologians are highly unlikely to come to these extreme and unbiblical conclusions, but the concept of Christ’s *munus triplex* risks obscuring the differentiated roles of the Father, Son, and Spirit, which may eventually lead to a confusion of divine roles, and consequently, Christian roles in the church and family.

I. THESIS

Robert J. Sherman articulates Christ’s *munus triplex* in relation to the Trinity, “More specifically, while recognizing Christ’s three-fold work [king, priest, and prophet] to be fully his own and fully trinitarian, it is also appropriate to understand his royal work as done on behalf of the Father, his priestly work be understood as his own *proper* work as Son, and his prophetic work as done *on behalf* of the Spirit.”¹³ Sherman explains the term “proper” clearly: “I say ‘proper’ because as the Son he alone of the triune persons was to be the incarnate one (a prerequisite for his priestly, sacrificial work), and not because this office and work has primacy over the other two.”¹⁴ In general, while this writer agrees with Sherman that Christ’s works are inseparable or undivided in the external works of the Father and the Spirit, I attempt to move beyond Sherman’s thesis of the trinitarian works by, first, making a proper distinction between their roles. Since Christ’s kingly and prophetic works are actually “on behalf of” the Father and the Spirit, respectively, this

¹¹Wayne A. Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More Than One Hundred Disputed Questions* (reprint, Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 433.

¹²In the second century A.D., forerunners of Sabellianism, emphasizing the unity of God, taught that the Father was incarnated, suffered, and died. See Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* ed. John Bolt, and John Vriend (4 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 2:290.

¹³Robert Sherman, *King, Priest, and Prophet: A Trinitarian Theology of Atonement* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 116-17. Emphasis added.

¹⁴Sherman, *King, Priest, and Prophet*, 117, n. 1.

means that the priestly works alone *properly* belong to Christ, and the other two roles (kingly and prophetic) should *properly* belong to the Father and the Spirit.

This article, therefore, argues from scriptural and theological grounds that *munus triplex* should be better applied, not to Jesus alone, but to the Three Persons of the Trinity, respectively. This writer will explore, first, the ultimate kingship belonging to the Father in relation to the Son, as seen in three vital concepts: "sending and obedience of the Son," "session and head of Christ," and "King of kings and Lord of lords."

Second, this writer attempts to demonstrate that the Spirit, properly speaking, is the permanent "prophet." One cannot deny the fact that God spoke through his Son (Heb 1:1-3), yet it has always been the Spirit who consistently speaks to/through the Old Testament prophets, the New Testament apostles (Acts 28:25; 2 Peter 1:20-21), and even to the churches (Rev 2:7; 3:6), then and now, through Spirit-inspired Scripture.

Finally, this chapter will show that Jesus primarily and perpetually carries out the royal priestly ministry, as seen in his permanent function as the "Lamb" (Rev 13:8), his continual high-priestly intercession (Heb 7:25), and his people's ultimate function as the royal priesthood modeled after Christ's priesthood (Rev 5:9-10; 20:6).

In summary, I attempt to demonstrate the distinctiveness of the Father as the "Proper Potentate,"¹⁵ the Spirit as the "Permanent Prophet," and the Son as the "Perpetual Priest." The ultimate intention of re-examining and revising the claim of Jesus's *munus triplex* is to enable Christians to appreciate the diversity of roles (as well as the unity) of the Triune God, and to reorient the church to her priestly task (rather than "prophetic" or "kingly" function) as the central mission-ministry of the church of Christ.¹⁶

II. FATHER AS THE PROPER POTENTATE

Scripture is clear that the Father is the *ultimate* potentate, although

¹⁵While the term "proper" can refer to "actual" or "in the strictest sense," it is also used in relation to "Theology Proper," or Paterology, the study of the first Person of the Trinity, God the Father. See, "What is Paterology? What is Theology Proper?" *Compelling Truth*, <https://www.compellingtruth.org/theology-proper.html>. Also, see Charles Hodge, "Theology Proper," <https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/theologyproper.html#origin>.

¹⁶The latter is the focus of future research, namely, "The Priesthood of Christ and Christians," which is beyond the scope of this article.

this kind of expression often seems to offend some theologians who are adamant about the “equality” of the Father and the Son.¹⁷ Delving into some crucial passages concerning the concepts of the sending and obedience of the Son; the session and head of Christ; and the title “King of kings, Lord of lords” may suffice to explain that the Father is the “proper” King, even in relation to the Son.

1. *Sending and Obedience of the Son.* That “the Father sent the Son” is an irreversible act and fact in the Gospels, especially in the Fourth Gospel. Jesus never sent the Father, but the Father sent the Son (John 3:16-17; 4:34).¹⁸ This act of sending simply implies a greater authority of the Father over the Son. Never is a superior sent by his subordinate, but always a subordinate by his superior. In fact, Jesus himself said it plainly, “Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him” (John 13:16).¹⁹ Jesus was not only talking about his disciples, but also referring to himself as the one sent by his Father who is “greater” (John 13:20).²⁰ It is in this context of sending that Jesus declared unambiguously, “I go to the Father; the Father is greater than I” (John 14:28b).²¹ Some simply take the statement to mean Jesus’s inferiority to the Father, namely, his inferior deity (essence) to that of the Father. Nevertheless, Guthrie, from this statement, “the Father is greater than I,” perceives the Son’s total dependence on the Father (John 5:19, 30), that is, the Son’s “perfect obedience” to his Father’s will (John 15:10).²² Guthrie suggests that the Son’s act of total obedience is due to his earthly (temporal) state, in contrast to the heavenly (eternal) state.²³

¹⁷Kevin Giles, *The Trinity & Subordinationism: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporary Gender Debate* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2002), 82, 85, 267.

¹⁸The Father’s sending of the Son does not in any way jeopardize the divine identity of the latter, but it presupposes the pre-existence of Jesus. Guthrie argues that the Son “could not be sent unless he was pre-existent. The relationship of the Father and the Son is seen as a continuation of that which existed before the incarnation (cf. John 17:4, 5).” Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1981), 314.

¹⁹All scriptural verses are taken from *New American Standard Bible* unless indicated otherwise.

²⁰“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me” (John 13:20).

²¹Jesus’s origination from the Father and his incarnation in servant form (or human nature) are the traditional positions to explain “the Father is greater than I,” but they have been found lacking. See a detailed critique in Hongyi Yang, *A Development, Not a Departure: The Lacunae in the Debate of the Doctrine of the Trinity and Gender Roles* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2018), 286-96.

²²Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*, 314.

²³Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*, 314.

All would agree that the aim of the incarnate Son is humility, that is, to obey his Father in the fullest sense in all of his works, including his knowledge. Regarding his limitation in knowledge about the exact time of his own *parousia* (Matt 24:36; Mark 13:32), Jesus, despite his mutual and comprehensive knowledge with God the Father (Matt 11:27), chose willingly not to know the time or, stated otherwise, voluntarily chose to obey his Father to the fullest in his incarnate form. Commenting on Matthew 24:36, Letham captures beautifully, "Jesus as the Son claims a relation to the Father of great personal intimacy, exclusive and unique, which is marked by full and willing obedience to the Father."²⁴ Edwards explains Mark 13:32 in a similar fashion on Jesus' alleged ignorance, "Here the bold assertion of divine Sonship is yoked to the unlikely limitation of ignorance;...he admits to what he does *not* know and *cannot* do;... for Jesus does not claim the prerogatives of divine Sonship apart from complete obedience to the Father's will but rather forsakes claims and calculations in favor of humble confidence in the Father's will."²⁵

The Father is never said in Scripture, explicitly or implicitly, to obey the Son. The theological statement, "the Son obeyed the Father who sent him," is another way of saying that the Father had a greater authority than the Son. Nonetheless, the Father gave his supreme authority to his Son without reservation (Matt 28:18-20) to reign over the whole universe until the moment he delivers the kingdom to God the Father again and subjects himself to the Father's authority (1 Cor 15:24, 28). That the Son received the universal authority from the Father is another direct indication that the Father is greater than the Son (Matt 28:18-20). After the resurrection, Jesus now reigns over the universe. In other words, he is the king. Jesus' authority to reign, however, is received from the Father.²⁶

The reality of the Father sending the Son and of the Son obeying his Father clearly indicates greater authority of the Father over the Son, and the latter's submission to the former. Guthrie incisively notes that "those books of the NT which have the most explicit teaching on the subordination of the Son (especially John and Hebrews), have

²⁴Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004), 39.

²⁵James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 407. Emphasis original.

²⁶Further discussion on Christ's kingship is under the section "King of Kings, Lord of Lords."

the highest Christology.²⁷ In other words, it is not an issue whether the Son submits (in total obedience) to the Father, as is clearly taught in Scripture, but the question is whether it is scriptural to speak of the Son's *eternal* equality (in essence) and *eternal* subordination (in function) to the Father in the same breath. Certainly, Jesus did not suffer from the so-called "inferiority complex" and was never trying to grasp equality with his Father (Phil 2:6) because he is already equal with the Father in divine essence (John 1:1-3).²⁸ The central and controversial issue concerns the Son's subordination, specifically, whether the Son's functional subordination is temporal (during incarnation) or eternal (throughout eternity). We shall explore the issue further in the next two themes.

2. "*Session and Head of Christ.*" After he defeated all enemies, especially death and the devil, Jesus ascended into heaven to be seated at the right hand of the Father (Matt 26:64; Mark 16:19; Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33; 5:31; 7:55-56; Rom 8:34; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3; 10:12-13; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22). This unambiguous teaching on Jesus' royal session is a direct fulfillment of Psalm 110:1: "The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet'" (cf. Heb 10:12-13; 1 Peter 3:22). On the one hand, Christ's session refers to his equality with the Father in authority and glory; on the other hand, this strong image of session at the Father's right hand also portrays Jesus' subjection to the Father's supreme authority. The Father bestows on the Son authority over the entire universe. The twofold concept of Jesus' invincible reign as well as his absolute submission to his Father appears to be biblically consistent.

In 1 Corinthians 15:27-28, Paul taught that after everything is *subject* to the Son's authority by the Father, the Son will voluntarily *subject* himself to the supreme reign of the Father. The verb "subject" (*hypotassō*) appears six times in just two short verses, all referring to the Son's submission, both actively and passively, to his Father, who subjects all things, except himself, under his Son's authority. A simple concordance study will sufficiently demonstrate that *hypotassō* ("to submit," "to subject," or "to obey") is always about a subordinate in submission to a greater authority, and never the other way around,

²⁷Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*, 314, n. 288.

²⁸To clear the reader's doubt or speculation, this writer believes without a doubt that Jesus is fully God and fully man; the Son is co-existing, co-eternal, and co-equal in essence with the Father.

in all divine or human relationships:

- a. All authorities are subject to God the Son (1 Cor 15:24-27)
- b. God the Son submits to God the Father (1 Cor 15:28)
- c. Jesus obeys his parents (Luke 2:51)
- d. Demons submit to the disciples (Luke 10:17, 20)
- e. Believers submit to the gospel of Christ (2 Cor 9:13; see also Rom 8:7; 10:3)
- f. Slaves obey their masters (Titus 2:9; 1 Peter 2:18)
- g. Citizens are subject to their government (Rom 13:1, 5; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13)
- h. Believers submit to their church leaders (Heb 13:17; 1 Cor 16:16; 1 Peter 5:5)
- i. Church submits to Christ (Eph 5:24)²⁹
- j. Wife submits to her husband (Eph 5:21-22; Col 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:1, 5)

If the order of any of the above relationships is reversed, it will certainly result in disarray (e.g., imagine if masters obeyed slaves, the disciples submitted to demons, or the government subjected itself to its citizens), or, imagine if the Father submitted to the Son, parents obeyed children, or the Son subjected himself to all other authorities, including death.

As for the intermediate state between Jesus' resurrection and return, the Father puts all enemies under the Son's feet, that is, the Father bestows on the Son the mediatorial authority to reign over all powers or dominions.³⁰ After the resurrection, the enthronement of the Son as the Father's vice-regent fulfills undoubtedly the prophecies of Psalms 8:5-6 and 110:1; namely, the Son is seated at the right hand of the Father and the Father subjects all things under his Son's feet. Then, at the end, the Son will return the kingdom to

²⁹The NT often portrays Christ as the bridegroom (Mark 2:19-20; John 3:29; Matt 25:1-13) and the Church as the bride of Christ (2 Cor 11:2).

³⁰Based on the order of resurrection (Christ first, Christians next, in 1 Cor 15:23), followed by Christ's return of the kingdom to the Father (15:24), the reign of Christ lasts from his resurrection up to his *parousia*, when the last enemy (death) is ultimately abolished (15:25-26). Regardless of one's Millennial perspectives (Premillennial or Amillennial), the passage certainly remains ambiguous about the exact timing of Christ's reign and Christ's return of the kingdom to the Father. Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 765-66.

his Father and place himself under the Father's supreme authority (1 Cor 15:24).³¹ Christ's surrender of the kingdom to his Father's reign does not mean that Christ ceases his reign or loses his authority. As noted in both the OT and NT, Christ's reign is everlasting (Isa 9:7; Dan 7:14; Heb 1:8; Rev 11:15). Nonetheless, the Son's submission to his Father remains indisputable biblical imagery of reality.

Attempts have been made to explain the submissive relationship of the Son to the Father: (1) Some argue that since the Son is subject to the Father, the former is, therefore, less than the latter in divine essence.³² The problem with this view is its heretical implication that Jesus is a "second" or "secondary" God, a position that is unanimously rejected by the evangelical theologians and churches. (2) Others, however, argue that the Son is subject to the Father only in respect to Jesus' humanity, but concerning his divine sonship, he is always equal to the Father.³³ At a closer look, this view seems to suggest that Jesus submits because of his incarnate form of "servanthood" (human), and yet, Jesus, with the identity of "sonship" (deity), does not need to obey his Father.³⁴ Unless one is prepared to deny Christ's *eternal* sonship (or the Father's *eternal* fatherhood), one has to admit that whether as a "human servant" or the "eternal son," Jesus *obeys* or *submits to* his Father. In other words, if one rejects the eternal submission of the Son to the Father, he or she is in danger of denying the eternal sonship with the Father.³⁵ (3) Thus, this writer

³¹On 1 Corinthians 15:24, "Then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power," Ciampa and Rosner state, "The timing implied by this verse is ambiguous, but the main point remains clear: the story ends with all things in perfect submission to the Father." Ciampa and Rosner, *Corinthians*, 765. On 1 Corinthians 15:23-28, Sherman states, "The Son truly is the king, but his royal office and work are exercised on behalf of the one who has granted this status and authority to him...[I]n his victorious and trinitarian work as king, God the Son acts on behalf of God the Father, the original and ultimate sovereign." Sherman, *King, Priest, and Prophet*, 121-22.

³²Giles, *Trinity & Subordinationism*, 63-85.

³³Ciampa and Rosner, *Corinthians*, 777; Alan F. Johnson, *1 Corinthians* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 294.

³⁴Fee argues, "As in two earlier passages (2:22-23 and 11:3), the language of the subordination of the Son to the Father is functional, referring to the Son's 'work' of redemption, not ontological, referring to Christ's being as such." Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (revised, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 841-42.

³⁵Millard J. Erickson, *Who's Tampering with the Trinity? An Assessment of the Subordination Debate* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009), 44-48. Grudem argues for "equal in being but subordinate in role" because without the latter "there is no inherent difference" in how they relate to each other; and consequently, there is no eternal existence of the distinct persons. In the first edition, Grudem reasons, "if the Son is not eternally subordinate to the Father in role, then the Father is not eternally 'Father' and the Son is not eternally 'Son.' This would mean that the Trinity has not

supports the position of the Son's *eternal ontological equality* and yet *eternal functional subordination* to his Father (Phil 2:6-11; 1 Cor 15:24-28). In view of his deity, the Son is always of equal essence with the Father; with respect to his role (whether in the incarnate form or as the eternal Son) and function, Jesus is always and irreversibly submissive to his Father.³⁶

Paul, in fact, described the relational order of Father-Son in another place in 1 Corinthians: "God [the Father] is the head of Christ" (1 Cor 11:3c). "Headship," in this case, does not imply superiority in essence, but it does imply order of "leadership."³⁷ In this passage, that the Father is the "head" of the Son is not merely a reference to the latter's incarnation or humanity (cf. Eph 1:22-23; 1 Cor 11:3a).³⁸ Rather, it is more an expression of a permanent order in the Father-Son relationship. Stated otherwise, Jesus' submission to the Father's authority is not just in his incarnate state, but also in his ascension and his *parousia* states. Even more plainly, the subordination of the Son in obedience to the Father, or the headship of the Father over the Son, is neither temporal nor temporary, but eternal, in the divine relationship.

The fact and act of submission is manifest in the Son of God. His intentionally humble obedience to his Father is not just for a time but forever. The supreme authority or kingship, therefore, belongs to the Father. This leads us to explore Jesus's title "King of kings and Lord of lords," in view of the Father as the ultimate potentate.

3. "*King of kings and Lord of lords.*" The title "King of kings and Lord of lords" is directly applied to Christ Jesus in the last book of the Bible (Rev 17:14; 19:16). If Jesus is the absolute King, what do we

eternally existed." Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 251. This statement has been removed in page 300 of the second edition.

³⁶See Grudem's persuasive arguments for the Son's eternal submission to the authority of the Father in Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 2nd ed., 301-19.

³⁷In Martin H. Manser, ed., *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (Logos Library System, 2009) under the theme "Headship" (entry 5700) and sub-theme "Headship within the Godhead," the author recognizes both "The Father's eternal headship" (1 Cor 11:3; 15:24-28; Phil 2:6) and "The Father's headship in the Son's earthly life and ministry" (John 6:38; Matt 26:39; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42; Phil 2:6-8; Heb 5:7-8). In summary, the headship of the Father over the Son remains, whether in the Son's pre-existing or incarnate state. The NT clearly teaches the Father's eternal headship and, therefore, implies the Son's eternal submission to the Father.

³⁸Fee argues for the Father's headship over the Son only in his incarnational stage: the headship (1 Cor 11:3) "refers to the incarnational work of Christ. God is the source of Christ..." Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 505.

mean when we say that the Father is the ultimate King? The phrase “King of kings” appears six times in the whole Scripture. All three uses in the OT refer to Gentile kings (Ezra 7:12; Ezek 26:7; Dan 2:37).³⁹ In the NT, it is applied once to God (1 Tim 6:15b), twice to Jesus (Rev 17:14; 19:16). When referring to God or Jesus, the added phrase “Lord of lords” precedes or follows “King of kings.” A closer look reveals a few important observations: (1) The OT, except LXX, never uses “King of kings” for God, but only for human kings;⁴⁰ (2) The OT uses the combination of “God of gods” and “Lord of lords” to refer to God alone;⁴¹ and (3) The combined title “Kings of kings, Lord of lords,” while referring to God (1 Tim 6:15), is directly applied to the Son (Rev 17:14; 19:16). In other words, the title “Lord of lords” used to refer to Yahweh alone in the OT is now of Jesus in the NT. This is none other than a claim that Jesus is co-equal with God who deserves worship. The “King of kings, Lord of lords” expression is to “make the resounding claim that God’s authority and power to rule over all human powers are beyond compare.”⁴² Biblical scholars state that this NT phrase has its root in the OT and Hellenistic Judaism, as is particularly evident in the LXX, “God of gods and Lord of lords and King of kings” (*Theos tōn theōn kai kurios tōn kuriōn kai basileu tōn basileōn*, Dan 4:37), in and against the context of pagan polytheism,⁴³ as well as in the Pseudepigrapha First Enoch 9:4, “And they said to the Lord of the ages: ‘Lord of lords, God of gods, King of kings, and God of the ages...’” in the context of eschatological judgment.⁴⁴

What is the significance of the “King of kings, Lord of Lords” in respect to the Father and the Son in the NT? Paul’s doxological

³⁹Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 331.

⁴⁰Of course, one cannot neglect that God is described as the “King of all the earth” (Psalm 47:7) and the one who rules over the whole universe (Psalm 22:28). In other words, he is the King who rules over all kings (Dan 2:21). The concern of this writer, however, is about how Scripture uses the phrase “King of kings.”

⁴¹Deuteronomy 10:17 uses “the God of gods and the Lord of lords”; and Psalm 136:3 uses only “Lord of lords” to refer to Yahweh in worship. King Nebuchadnezzar spoke, knowingly or not, of Daniel’s God as “God of gods and a Lord of kings” (Dan 2:47). See also “God of gods and Lord of lords and King of kings” (LXX Dan 4:37); “the glorious Lord God, King of kings” (3 Macc 5:35).

⁴²Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus, The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 421.

⁴³Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 420.

⁴⁴G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1999), 881.

expression *monos dunastās* ("only Potentate")⁴⁵ is followed by "the King of kings and the Lord of lords" (1 Tim 6:15b).⁴⁶ Dale Moody asserts that this phrase speaks of Christ as the "Potentate," who possesses both kingship and lordship which are ascribed to God alone in the OT; therefore, "The sovereignty of Jesus grows out of his unity with God as disclosed in the resurrection."⁴⁷ On the other hand, I. Howard Marshall, commenting on this verse, explains that it refers to the belief that "God as supreme ruler. . . he alone occupies this status over against all possible rivals. . . whatever forces there are in the universe are subject to God."⁴⁸ In view of Paul's common usage of "God" for "God the Father" (e.g., 1 Cor 12:4-6), if "God" in this verse (1 Tim 6:15b) refers to God the Father, then we could perhaps substantiate the notion that the Father is the "ultimate" potentate over all creation as well as the Son. Nevertheless, in what sense are the Father and the Son "King of kings, Lord and lords" (Rev 17:14; 19:16)?

Scholars use the "suzerain-vassal" analogy to describe the kingship of the Father and the Son, where the Father is the ultimate king (suzerain) who grants the Son, another king (vassal), power to rule (Psalm 2:7).⁴⁹ Another possible explanation is the emperor-general imagery, where the Father (king) sends out his Son (military general) to execute the former's mission and power against all rebellious or disobedient powers. When the mission is accomplished, the Son (general) returns to the Father (king) to acknowledge his ultimate submission to the Father's sovereignty (1 Cor 15:27-28).⁵⁰ Both of these analogies may contribute positively, though not perfectly, to explaining the kingship of the Father and the Son.

The pattern of the divine relationship where the Son's kingship always submits to his Father's sovereignty could be better illustrated with the analogy of a king and his son, namely, his "prince," where

⁴⁵This writer's literal translation. NASB uses "only Sovereign"; NIV uses "only Ruler" (1 Tim 6:15).

⁴⁶First Timothy 6:15b-16 corresponds with the doxological statement, "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be glory and honor forever and ever. Amen" (1 Tim 1:17).

⁴⁷Dale Moody, *The Word of Truth: A Summary of Christians Doctrine Based on Biblical Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 378-79.

⁴⁸I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 666-67.

⁴⁹Ciampa and Rosner, *Corinthians*, 776.

⁵⁰Ciampa and Rosner, *Corinthians*, 776-77.

the king grants his son power by sending out his son to battle against the enemies, and subjects all authorities under his prince. This king-prince imagery appears in both the OT and NT. The coronation language (as fulfilled in Jesus) states, “But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain. I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You’” (Psalm 2:6-7; cf. Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). In the NT, Jesus’s parables of the temple tax (Matt 17:24-27) and the marriage feast (Matt 22:1-14) depict God the Father as the “king” and his son (i.e., Jesus himself) as a “prince” figure, though implicitly. In Acts 5:31, Peter and other apostles proclaimed that Jesus “is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as “Prince” (*argāgos*). The translation portrays an adequate picture of the “prince” sitting at the right hand of the sovereign King, the Father, to grant repentance and forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:31).⁵¹

Jesus’ “kingship,” as described in Revelation 17:14 and 19:16, is against the backdrop of wicked human kings or demonic rulers who will fight him. Jesus is depicted as the one who is sent out to execute God’s justice and judgment (19:11, 15) and to wage war against those “pseudo” kings. He proves to be the undefeatable and most worthy king among all human or demonic kings (19:21; 20:10). All dominions, powers, or enemies are subject to the kingship of Christ, who is seated at the right hand of the Father (Psalm 110:1; Rev 3:21). By taking into consideration the subthemes mentioned above, namely, the “sending and obedience,” and “session and head,” it is adequate to conclude that God the Father subjects all things to the Son’s authority; and yet the Father himself is not subject to the Son but the Son to the Father, so that “God the Father may be all in all” (1 Cor 15:27-29). In summary, Jesus is the King over all (human or demonic) kings, but his kingship remains under the kingship of the Father, who is the King over all, including the Son. This may explain the confession that God the Father is the ultimate potentate (1 Tim 6:15b), even in relation to the Son.

⁵¹The term *argāgos* appears only four times in the NT, all referring to Christ (Acts 3:15; 5:31; Heb 2:10; 12:2), who is the founder or “author” of life, salvation, and faith for all believers (NIV used “author” in Acts 3:15; Heb 2:10; 12:2). Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (10 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 1:487-88.

III. SPIRIT AS PERMANENT PROPHET

God the Father revealed and spoke through his Son during his incarnate state (John 1:18; 14:9; Heb 1:2), but Scripture as a whole perceives that the Holy Spirit is the one continuously speaking to/through the OT prophets, the NT apostles, and even to the churches (Rev 2:7; 3:6) past and present, through Spirit-inspired Scripture.

The Spirit is the "permanent prophet" who continually spoke God's word from the OT period to NT times. In the OT, the Spirit initiates, impels, or inspires the chosen prophets to convey God's will and word. The fact that the Spirit spoke through the prophets is testified in, for example, Paul's word: "The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers" (Acts 28:25b). The author of Hebrews also clearly identified the Holy Spirit as the one speaking through the psalmist (compare Heb 3:7-11 and Ps 95:7-11) to rebuke the people's hardened hearts. In other words, the Spirit is seen as Yahweh who consistently speaks to, or through, the prophets. In the NT, God spoke through his Son perfectly (Heb 1:1-3) for a time, but it is the Holy Spirit who would continue to teach and remind the apostles of Christ's words (John 14:26); who would speak of Christ and guide them into all truth (John 16:7, 13); who would empower them to preach the gospel to all nations (Acts 1:8); and who would speak through them in times of persecution (Matt 10:19-20; Mark 13:11). First Peter 1:10-12⁵² beautifully captures the Spirit's ongoing prophetic works from the OT to NT times: (1) The "Spirit of Christ," namely, the Holy Spirit, inspired the OT prophets to foretell with eager anticipation Christ's sufferings and subsequent glories, which were also the focus of the angels; (2) The same Holy Spirit enabled the NT evangelists and Christians to proclaim the gospel of Christ, "as one with the message of the OT" (i.e., crucifixion and resurrection) to all people, including the generations to follow.⁵³

The Spirit is the one who inspired Scripture, which is God's words

⁵²"As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look."

⁵³Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 98, 103-5; see 97-106 for detailed exegesis on this passage, especially on the Spirit's work in both OT and NT times.

written in and through human words.⁵⁴ The Apostle Peter claimed, “But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Pet 1:20-21). Thiselton succinctly explains, regarding this verse, that “the declarations of the Old Testament prophets are confirmed by the Spirit, who inspired them.”⁵⁵ Peter’s claim about Scripture corresponds with Paul’s teaching that all Scripture is *theopneustos* “God-breathed” (2 Tim 3:16), that is, the Holy Spirit is one who not only inspires but also interprets Scripture, for the “spiritual things are interpreted by the Spirit” (1 Cor 2:9-15).⁵⁶ The purpose of Spirit-inspired Scripture is “for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17). Paul described the Word of God as the sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17) by which Christians may stand firm in their faith against the devil’s attacks.

The continual act of the Spirit speaking to the churches in the past and present shows distinctly that he is the permanent prophet. The Book of Revelation presents the Spirit as one who declares authoritatively to the victorious churches or Christians the promises of enjoying the tree of life, escaping the second death, and receiving a new name on a white stone (Rev 2:7, 11, 17; see also 2:29; 3:6, 13, 22). This Spirit is the “seven spirits of God” (Rev 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6), which may be understood as the “prophetic Spirit,” according to Montague.⁵⁷ Did the Spirit’s “prophetic” work cease after Revelation, or with the passing of the apostles and the apostolic churches? Jesus promised that the *paraklētos*, i.e., the Holy Spirit, will indwell believers and be with them forever (John 4:16-17). Furthermore, the Spirit will continue to mediate the presence of the Son and the Father, as well as carry out the universal ministry to “convict” (*elegxō*) the

⁵⁴Peter L. H. Tie, “Spirit, Scripture, Saints, and Seminary: Toward a Reappropriation of ‘Spirit Illumination’ in ‘Scripture Interpretation’ for Seminarians,” in *Spirit Wind: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in Global Theology—A Chinese Perspective*, ed. Peter L. H. Tie and Justin T. T. Tan (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2020), 4.

⁵⁵Thiselton, *Holy Spirit*, 151.

⁵⁶Thiselton, *Holy Spirit*, 151; Peter Toon, “Historical Perspectives on the Doctrine of Christ’s Ascension, Pt 4: The Exalted Jesus and God’s Revelation,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 141, no. 562 (1984): 118.

⁵⁷George T. Montague, *The Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition* (New York: Paulist, 1976), 323.

world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11). This Spirit's ministry of conviction parallels the teaching of Paul that "through the Spirit of 'prophecy' (preaching?)" the non-believers' hearts are brought to conviction of repentance and acknowledgment of God's presence among his people (1 Cor 14:24-25).⁵⁸

Jesus is traditionally seen as the "Word Incarnate," and yet the Spirit could be properly described as the "Word Inscraper," the one who inspired the OT prophets, the NT apostles, and the Bible; who inscribes God's Word in people's hearts; who illuminates God's Word; and who indwells God's people to live out and speak out God's Word effectively and persuasively. Thus, the Holy Spirit is the permanent prophet.

IV. CHRIST AS PERPETUAL PRIEST

While the Father reigns as the ultimate king and the Spirit acts as the permanent prophet, the Son functions as the perpetual priest, as supported by the notions of the "Lamb" (Rev 13:8), the "High Priest" (Heb 7:25), and the Christian priesthood (Rev 5:9-10; 20:6).

1. *The "Lamb."* The idea of the "Lamb" suggests that Jesus holds to the priestly service not just in his incarnate state, but also before time and in the *eschaton*. First, Jesus was depicted as the Lamb of God who died to bear the sins of the world (John 1:29, 36), the Lamb who was prefigured in the sacrificial lamb of the OT practices (Exod 12:11-13; 29:38-34) and prophesied by the prophet Isaiah (Isa 53:6-7; cf. Acts 8:32). Jesus was seen and slain as the Lamb in historical times.

Furthermore, the Lamb's identity and work are not merely restricted to his incarnate period. Revelation 13:8b mentions⁵⁹ "in the book of life of the lamb who has been slain from the foundation of the world" (my translation).⁶⁰ Scholars debate whether "from the foundation of the world" modifies "the book of life" or the "lamb who was slain."⁶¹ The former is parallel to the language of Revelation

⁵⁸Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit*, 143.

⁵⁹Michael W. Holmes, ed., *The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition* (Lexham Press; Logos Library System; Society of Biblical Literature), 2011–2013.

⁶⁰NASB translates Rev 13:8: "from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain." NIV, however, takes a more literal translation: "in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world."

⁶¹Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 503; David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, Word Biblical Commentary 52B (Dallas, TX: Word, 1998), 746-47.

17:8, “the book of life from the foundation of the world.” Osborne adequately advises Christians to respect the original “word order and recognize God’s redemptive plan that has been established ‘from the foundation of the world’” based on God’s foreknowledge (1 Pet 1:2, 18-20), without adhering to a supralapsarian view of salvation.⁶² The main idea is that the Son was already considered (i.e., foreknown and chosen) to be the “Lamb” before human history (1 Pet 1:19-20).

In John’s vision of the future, Jesus is also portrayed as the Lamb: (1) The Lamb will receive worship (Rev 5:8, 12-13; 7:9-10; 15:3), execute judgment (6:1, 7, 9, 16; 8:1; 14:10; 17:14), and shepherd and save his people (7:17; 14:1); (2) The book of life that will be disclosed is the book belonging to the Lamb (13:8); (3) The believers follow and belong to the Lamb (14:4); and (4) The final marriage and supper of the Lamb, as well as the bride of the Lamb, will appear (19:7, 9; 21:9). Jesus is not only the Lamb who died but also the Lamb who reigns and will do so eternally (Rev 5:5-6). In summary, Jesus was, is, and will be deemed the Lamb, from before the beginning to the very end of time. Thus, this “Lamb” imagery supports the concept that Jesus’s constant role is priestly in character.

2. *The “High Priest.”* Scripture plainly teaches that Jesus is the perpetual high priest who offered the sacrificial lamb, that is, himself, on behalf of sinners. After “this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God” (Heb 10:12, NIV). Although Jesus accomplished his salvific work on the cross as he uttered his last words, “It is finished” (John 19:30), he did not cease his priestly ministry. At his resurrection and ascension, he sat down at the right hand of the Father to continue his high-priestly intercession in order to secure the ultimate justification and salvation of his people (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25).⁶³ By sitting at the right hand of the Father, Jesus is not just called the “High Priest,” but

⁶²Osborne, *Revelation*, 503-4. “From the foundation of the world” appears 10 times in the NT (Matt 13:35; 25:34; Luke 11:50; John 17:24; Eph 1:4; Heb 4:3; 9:26; 1 Pet 1:20; Rev 13:8; 17:8).

⁶³For a detailed discussion on the intercession of Christ (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25), see Peter C. Orr, *Exalted Above the Heavens: The Risen and Ascended Christ* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2018), 182-98. Orr argues, “This intercessory prayer of Christ mirrors both God’s desire to give believers all things ([8:]32) and the Spirit’s intercession for us ([8:]26-27) and shows the absurdity of Christ’s ever condemning us” (190-91). On Hebrews 7:25, Orr explains that “there is ‘now-not yet’ tension with respect to the salvation of believers. In 7:25 it is Christ’s ongoing intercessory prayer that undergirds the assurance that believers *will* be saved permanently” (197).

also considered the "Royal Priest" (Heb 5:5-6).⁶⁴ This latter image becomes the crucial and central model for Christian identity: the royal priesthood.

3. *The Christian Priesthood.* Christian priesthood imitates the priesthood of Christ. The role of royal priesthood is God's original intention and calling for his chosen people (Exod 19:6; Isa 61:6; 66:21). They have become the priests of God (1 Peter 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6) and will continue to be so until they become priests who will eventually reign with Christ (5:9-10; 20:6); that is, their *kingly* priesthood will be fully materialized.⁶⁵ Revelation 20:6 specifically mentions that they will be "priests of God and of Christ," suggesting, on the one hand, that "Christ is on a par with God, which is underscored elsewhere in the Apocalypse (e.g., 5:13-14; 7:9-17)," and on the other hand, that the resurrected saints will be *like Christ* (in view of his royal high-priestly role indicated in Heb 5:5-6; 7:11, 17, 21), serving as priests who reign for eternity.⁶⁶ Nonetheless, there is no indication that Christians or the church as a whole serve God by emulating Christ's prophetic function. In fact, only a few may receive the gift (of prophecy) from the Spirit to prophesy (1 Cor 12:7, 27-30). Neither Christ nor any Christian will continue the prophetic role in the *eschaton*.⁶⁷ Furthermore, although the believers will serve as the *royal* priesthood, the "kingly" aspect will only be consummated at their resurrection, just as Christ assumed his ultimate kingly authority at his resurrection or ascension, without in any way minimizing his priestly status. In short, it is Christ's priestly role, rather than his kingly or prophetic function, that has become the constant model

⁶⁴The idea of the priest who reigns is based on Zechariah 6:13, "Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the LORD, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices."

⁶⁵Peter L. Tie, *Restore Unity, Recover Identity, Refine Orthopraxy*, 98. Notably, Garrett does not include Revelation 20:6 in his exposition: "Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years" (ESV). For example, in his *Systematic Theology*, while exploring the NT passages related to the Christian priesthood, Garrett notes Revelation 20:6 in his footnote but does not include it in his three main texts, 1 Pet 2:4-6; Rev 1:5b-6; 5:9-10 (2:609, and footnote 32). Also, see James L. Garrett Jr., "The Priesthood of All Christians: From Cyprian to John Chrysostom," *SWJT* 30 (1988): 22.

⁶⁶Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 1002-3.

⁶⁷Toon argues that at Christ's ascension he is not just the exalted king and priest but also the "exalted prophet." A closer look, however, reveals that it is actually the Holy Spirit who directly mediates, inspires, and illuminates Christ's words to and through his people. See Peter Toon, "Historical Perspectives on the Doctrine of Christ's Ascension," 112-19.

or perpetual pattern for Christians, now and forever.

V. CONCLUSION

The concept of *munus triplex* has been prevalent since the Reformation, especially through the work of John Calvin. Since then, churches have been trying to apply the *munus triplex* to Christian mission-ministry, but at the risk of minimizing the Trinity's distinctiveness and misdirecting the people in their calling. By looking into the distinct roles of the Trinity, we have learned that the threefold role should be applied to the Triune God, distinctively and respectively: Father the Potentate, Son the Priest, and Spirit the Prophet. Only when we have properly distinguished the respective roles of the Trinity are we ready to focus on fulfilling the role God has for his church, namely, the Christian priesthood after the pattern of Christ's priesthood.

In his earliest work on the Christian priesthood, Garrett seems thoroughly convinced on the biblical doctrine of Christian priesthood and its practical implications:

The priesthood of believers was not a dead phrase, not a shibboleth of Sixteenth Century controversies. It was alive, for priests were still offering living sacrifices of intercession and beneficent deeds! Such deeds were demonstrations of faith that issued in love, of love that was not limited to words, of service to "one of the least of these my brethren." I was convinced in the inner fibers of my being that herein was the true meaning of our common priesthood and it was a ray of hope for an effectual ministry in today's world. I prayed: God be merciful to this poor failing and faltering priest, and give me the vision, the love, and the grace to fulfill that priestly calling to which we all who are Christ's have been called.⁶⁸

Garrett's recovery of the Christian priesthood personally (for himself) and universally (for all believers) is a call for church renewal, but the "priestly calling" of all believers must be rooted, not in the kingship

⁶⁸Garrett, "Recovering My Priesthood," *Home Missions* (February 1962): 15.

or prophethood that properly and respectively belong to the Father and the Spirit, but distinctively in the priesthood of Christ.

The re-appropriation of *munus triplex* on the Trinity,⁶⁹ as this article argues, is only an initial step to the "priesthood" research. This writer by no means denies the kingly and prophetic tasks of Christ, but will in the near future biblically re-examine the traditional *munus triplex* (threefold office) of Christ and propose a more nuanced concept that may capture more precisely the central and unique role of Jesus, the so-called *munus monoplex* of Christ.⁷⁰



⁶⁹Hank Voss provides a helpful explanation for "appropriation": "Appropriation helps the royal priesthood identify what a mature response to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit might look like. The doctrine can be defined as follows: Appropriation is a way of speaking about the God revealed in Scripture in which a divine action or attribute is assigned to a particular Person of the Trinity based on that Person's properties. The explicit goal of appropriation is to better manifest the divine Persons in the minds of believers." Uche Anizor and Hank Voss, *Representing Christ: A Vision for the Priesthood of All Believers* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2016), 96-97.

⁷⁰This new concept was previously presented. See Peter L. Tie, "Jesus' *Munus Triplex* Re-examined: A Proposal for *Munus Monoplex* or the One Unified Role of Jesus Christ." Presentation at the Evangelical Theological Society Annual Meeting (Southwest Region), Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas, USA, March 1-2, 2013.

BOOK REVIEWS

***Christian Platonism: A History.* Edited by Alexander J. B. Hampton and John Peter Kenney. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021, xv+497pp., \$130.00.**

The discussion of Christianity's relationship to Platonism has taken place in various pockets of academia, ranging among the disciplines of history, philosophy, and dogmatics, as well as hermeneutics and biblical studies. German scholars such as Adolf von Harnack of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century steered the conversation for subsequent generations, asserting the Hellenized nature of the post-New Testament Christian faith. The search for the "kernel" of truth sought to ascertain the essence of the biblical message, while also inaugurating fields of study to distinguish the "Jesus of history" from the "Christ of the Bible." The assumption within these inquiries is that Platonism and Greek thought in general had unduly influenced biblical interpretation and doctrinal development in the early centuries of church history. Not until recent generations of scholars has the question been reversed: what is the influence that Christianity had upon Platonism? *Christian Platonism: A History* brings together a score of academic voices to shed further light on the interplay between Christian faith and practice and the wide-reaching philosophical system of Platonic thought. Editors Alexander Hampton and John Peter Kenney attempt to show how "Platonism has been, and remains, the most powerful tradition of realism and anti-materialism in Western thought" (p. 4). They ably accomplish their goal with this volume, demonstrating the multivalent way Christianity and Platonism have interacted over the course of 2000 years.

Part one of the text deals with conceptual considerations, with chapters highlighting specific notions found in Platonic philosophy and how Christian thought has found coherence. Themes of the "the One" in Platonic thought (chapter 3) and Platonic theories of

creation (chapter 4) are discussed with an understanding of how they cohere with Christian theological notions of the Trinity and God's divine activity. In these chapters, the authors provide helpful coordinates for readers to understand how the thought of non-Christian Platonists fused with Christian theology. As an example of the insights available to readers from part one, Andrew Radde-Gallwitz notes how Platonism impacted trinitarian theology by providing support for "participation metaphysics" and "the more general theological dictum of divine immateriality and intelligibility" (p. 76). Part one concludes with a view of Thomas Aquinas and his theological interaction of Neoplatonism à la Dionysius, impacting his view of divine participation.

Part two provides readers with a historical survey of Platonism's impact on Christian thought, starting from the Bible and biblical world and ending with modern theological discussions. Platonism's impact on early Christian doctrinal development in western and eastern Christianity is clear, yet authors in this section provide helpful nuance to demonstrate the limits of Platonism when encountering biblical reflection (in the thought of Augustine of Hippo, for instance). Many scholars here note the influence of Platonic voices such as Philo, Plotinus, and Porphyry upon early Christian thinkers. Additionally, the influence of Dionysius is discussed at length. Helpful to note is how Christian thinkers prioritized biblical texts while cohering with Platonic concepts insofar as they comported with Christian doctrinal priorities. Renaissance and early modern thinkers such as Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499) and Jacob Böhme (1575–1624) began recovering and understanding Platonism for its own sake.

In Part 3 entitled "Engagements," the authors place Platonic thought in conversation with various fields of inquiry. Whether natural science, art, or love and friendship, this section demonstrates how Platonism continues to bear weight upon our modern thought and practice. This section serves as an application of sorts, showing readers how Platonic thought and Christianity merge towards current day considerations. This section contains helpful insight; however, some of the conclusions as it pertains to Christianity were lacking as explained below.

This volume is a helpful companion in the renewed discussion on the relationship between Christianity and Platonism. It does

not, however, answer every question with satisfaction. First, some chapters are rather abrupt in their conclusions. For example, chapter seven on the concept of theology appears to end in mid-thought and does not provide a satisfying conclusion to an important topic. Second, missing in this discussion is how Christianity was shaped by the Jewish thought world, including the theological foundation of the Old Testament. Platonic thought later buttressed discussions of Christian theology, but certainly the Old Testament and its theological categories had a major, if not controlling, role to play. Third, some chapters barely scratch the surface with their conclusions as they pertain to Christian thought. A specific example of this is the chapter on love and friendship. While helpful in understanding Plato and Aristotle's conception of friendship, as well as modern philosophers' interaction with them, how these observations impact Christian thought and practice is noticeably absent. The Christian tradition has much to say about love and friendship, yet this chapter did little to explore that in conversation with Platonic philosophy. Last, a concluding chapter or epilogue would have served to draw the multiplicity of observations together and provide readers further reflection for how to move forward in this discussion. In multi-authored volumes wherein writing styles and argumentation methods are mixed, a healthy and robust concluding chapter helps to bring all these voices back into conversation with one another for the sake of communicating one consistent message.

Despite these critiques, this volume provides ample evidence demonstrating the intimate connection between Platonic philosophical concepts and Christian appropriation for the sake of buttressing theological reflection. Each chapter stands as a microcosm of this important discussion, narrowing in on a particular facet towards building a larger whole. While some chapters might leave readers less than satisfied, and the lack of a concluding chapter may harm the effectiveness of the argument, this text needs to be read by those interested in the Platonic influence upon Christianity. Theologians will gain further clarity towards understanding how Christians read and integrated Platonic thought into Trinitarian theology, metaphysical renderings, and theological anthropology. Philosophers will increase their awareness of how Christian thinkers (at least in the early and medieval church) sought a synthesis of Platonic philosophy

and Christian theology for the sake of reinforcing divine realities. Later chapters in the “History” section of this text are instructive for their negative examples, providing reflection on what can happen when philosophy takes precedence over theology (as in the case of the Cambridge Platonist movement). For Christian scholars in general, this book will shed further light on Christianity’s ability to unite with certain systems of thought insofar as Christian theology is not compromised.

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***An Introduction to Christian Mysticism: Recovering the Wildness of the Spiritual Life.* By Jason M. Baxter. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021, 208pp., \$22.99.**

The notion of mysticism has a muddy, and often misunderstood, relationship to the Christian faith. From a full embrace to flat-out rejection, and everywhere in between, Christians have disagreed on its place—let alone its definition—in Christian spirituality. Complex and complicated, the idea of mysticism is difficult to define among even accomplished scholars of the field. Jason Baxter, associate professor of the arts and humanities at Wyoming Catholic College, seeks to address the confusion and propose a way to understand and appreciate Christian mysticism. He does so by exploring key works of Christian literature to understand how such authors described their experiences with God, collating that experience to bring forth a common idea of mysticism and how it can still function in Christian spirituality today. His task is great, and he provides numerous insights along the way, though the result may still leave readers feeling no less confused on how mysticism helps (or hurts) Christian faith and spirituality.

Baxter views his task in primarily literary terms, meaning, his exploration of mysticism began in the reading and teaching of literature. Thus, this text arose out of efforts to address his students’

questions on the subject. Baxter begins by tracing the modern existential crisis in the twentieth century via numerous literary figures such as Shūsaku Endō and Thomas Merton. It is no coincidence that the rise of a “secular world” has displaced many and left many wondering if there is not more to life than what we merely experience in our physical world. Indeed, our time is “weird” in the sense that it is utterly different than any era preceding it. Baxter does well to identify this crisis and observe why the recovery of mysticism, or something akin to it, might be a necessary effort. After his assessment of numerous twentieth-century voices, Baxter steps further back in time to understand the connections between mysticism among pre-Christian religion and philosophy. The primary player in this discussion is Plato and his philosophical descendants, namely the Neoplatonism of Plotinus and Porphyry. The concept of the “One,” arising from Plato’s cosmology and given distinct and mystical shape by Plotinus, was the destination of soul unencumbered by worldly desire.

From Plato, Baxter draws a direct line to Augustine and the “inward turn” presented by the bishop of Hippo in his *Confessions*. Baxter notes that, while certainly influenced by the Platonic tradition preceding him, Augustine “departs from the Platonic account in important ways” (p. 67). The inner turn of Augustine is to discover the God who was always there. It is an inward turn that moves back towards God. The ascent of the soul lauded by Platonists must be reckoned with the descent of Christ affirmed by Christians. No possibility of connection with God exists apart from God making such connection possible in the first place. Baxter highlights the role of love in the mystic experience of Augustine, one where love for God and the joy of knowing Love itself was integral for greater heights of spiritual ecstasy. This experience of love, however, is always tempered by the reality of sin and the impossibility of the full divine gaze this side of eternity. Hence, any such mystical experience is but a glance into the infinite beauty of God for Augustine.

From here, Baxter flips the coin to the other side of Christian mysticism to explore the unknowability of God, presented by voices such as Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Gregory of Nyssa, and Meister Eckhart. This is the mysticism of casting aside worldly desires and pursuits to experience God directly. For someone like Gregory, the

pursuit of virtue was integral to one's knowing and experiencing of God. For Dionysius the experience of God came through the *via negativa*—the recognition that God is completely other and to experience God was to remove preconceived notions and knowledge of who he is. Eckhart similarly emphasized the utter transcendence of God, and like his predecessors Gregory and Dionysius, emphasized the limitations of language to adequately describe God. All three focused on the role of nature in mediating our knowledge and experience of God. Baxter then moves to focus upon the Desert Fathers tradition, with its emphasis on spiritual warfare and contemplation. Evagrius of Pontus is a prominent voice in this tradition, and later monastic voices such as Hugh of St. Victor and Francis of Assisi were significantly influenced by earlier such mystics. This mysticism recognized our disconnect from God, from oneself, and from creation. Only in detachment from creation, can one truly appreciate creation for what it is, an opportunity to contemplate and experience God. This natural contemplation flourished in the east, according to Baxter, and was all but neglected in the West until the later Western monasticism of the Victorine and Franciscan traditions. Mystic experience of God for these individuals included the necessary practice of asceticism to shed one's desires.

Baxter concludes with an emphasis on *lectio divina* as a means of mystical reading and a guide to experience God through Scripture. He highlights the work of the Carthusian monks Guigo and Hugh of Balma, as well as the hermeneutical stylings of Meister Eckhart as models approaching this method of reading Scripture. The “participatory” nature of pre-modern Christian readings of Scripture represented in the tradition of *lectio divina*, according to Baxter, is an important element in regaining the “wildness of scriptural promises” (p. 151). The text concludes with brief sketches of four additional medieval figures who exemplify the Christian mystic tradition, specifically with a focus upon the love of God. These figures represent the flourishing of the mystic tradition leading up to the modern era, and thus provide readers with concluding figures who show the “wildness of spiritual life” as Baxter has described it. Baxter does well to show how these individuals, and the others discussed in the text, maintain a distinct Christian character as opposed to non-Christian (mainly neo-Platonic) notions of mystic encounter with the One.

An Introduction to Christian Mysticism introduces pivotal Christian mystics, and their influences, to many who may be unfamiliar to the discussion. The text misses its intended goal in providing a more thorough biblical and theological reflection to the topic. I agree that the experience of God grows as the “fruit of love and virtue and patience and diligence in prayer and discipleship” (p. 8), but if this is the definition of mysticism then every Christian is called to be a mystic. Missing is a robust biblical and theological foundation to define the term and its practice. Mysticism is akin to sanctification in the terms provided. While Scripture and theology are not absent, Baxter’s emphasis is on the individual figures and movements represented in the mystic tradition. Additionally, the assumption is that the exploration of mysticism resides chiefly in classical and medieval figures, rather than potential candidates in the Reformation and early modern periods. Tom Schwanda and others have made a case for reading the Puritans and early evangelicals such as Johnathan Edwards as mystics, albeit in a manner dependent upon theological foundations reared in the Reformation. While the “wildness” of Christian spirituality is promoted, the text is more commentary upon mystic figures and their thought rather than how such figures can help modern Christians correct what might be seen as dry and “heady” Christian spirituality. It is true that the notion of mystery is challenged by our modern secular culture, but is a recovery of mysticism the answer? If mysticism is the key to recovering the wildness of Christian spiritual life, Baxter would have done well to help readers understand how the mystic tradition helps solve our modern dilemma. Indeed, it seems that a recovery of the basic notion of the grandeur of the triune God, his beauty and redemptive work, and the implications of our union with Christ for our experience and knowledge of God are more foundational for addressing the secular crisis we face today. As one sympathetic to a mediated and nuanced recovery of mystic voices within the Christian tradition, I was hoping that Baxter would give us more tangible suggestions for readers. Thus, the book’s value lays in starting the conversation for those who are interested in the topic but might not be a “go to” manual or guide for how Christian mysticism addresses our secular world today.

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***Sequencing the Hebrew Bible: The Order of the Books.* By Casey K. Croy. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield-Phoenix Press, 2021, 247pp., \$75.00.**

In this monograph, Casey Croy contributes to the field of canon studies by examining the sequence of books in the Hebrew Bible and developing criteria for how canonical compilation might relate to textual composition. Croy defines “compilation criticism” as an examination of the Hebrew Bible that seeks “to discern if the arrangement of its books is significant” (p. 1). The goal of this analysis, then, is “to establish links between and among the Hebrew Bible’s books so that a cohesive whole emerges from the (sometimes disparate) parts” (p. 1).

One of the most common objections to the study of canonical contextuality is the presence of multiple arrangements in different manuscripts or reception traditions. Croy’s aim in this work is to address this particular challenge. As he poses, “Since multiple arrangements of the Hebrew Bible emerged in antiquity, is compilational criticism still a viable approach to understanding the Hebrew Bible?” (p. 3). Croy argues that this variation does not render book ordering irrelevant but rather is a sign of its significance for authors and compilers of the various canonical collections. His thesis is that “multiple arrangements of the Hebrew Bible are needed to account for all the compilational features within the Hebrew Bible” (p. 23). In other words, “compilational criticism must consider multiple arrangements of the Hebrew Bible because the composition of some of the Hebrew Bible’s books was influenced by more than one arrangement” (p. 57; cf. pp. 23–43; 206–13).

One of Croy’s key assumptions is that “the final forms of some books of the Hebrew Bible reveal an awareness of an emerging canon” (p. 25). Those who produced some of these books “were aware of an emerging canon of Scripture and composed their books to fill a

specific role within the arrangement of that emerging canon” (p. 27). This claim further requires “the presence of an emerging canon of the Hebrew Scriptures” that would have “influenced the composition of some books” (p. 57). In these instances, there would be textual features that can plausibly be understood as referring to a broader collection (i.e., canon-conscious composition). These literary features would be “understandable within the book itself” but could be better explained “by pointing to how the book in question was intended to form an intentional compilation with another book” (p. 58).

After describing the most important ancient witnesses to the Jewish arrangements of the Hebrew Bible and proposing methodological controls for “compilation criticism” (chapters 2–3), Croy discusses the compilation of Nahum in relation to Micah and Jonah (chapter 4), Ruth in relation to Judges, Proverbs, and Psalms (chapter 5), and Chronicles in relation to Kings and Ezra-Nehemiah (chapter 6). In addition to these local case studies, Croy also considers “macro-canonical structures” like an exile-return model in relation to the prophetic history that spans Genesis through Kings and the “messiah model” that notes strategic prophetic and poetic texts in relation to the anchoring position of the book of Moses (chapter 7).

While the sharpness of the argument shifts depending on the evidence at hand, Croy sees in each of these compilational studies possible evidence that demonstrates his basic thesis: that “the text or wording of several books within the Hebrew Bible was influenced by more than one arrangement of the Hebrew Bible” (p. 206). Accordingly, the study of the Hebrew Bible’s shape must include the analysis of multiple arrangements rather than a single linear sequence. For Croy, this necessity follows not only from the presence of multiple ordering traditions in the history of interpretation (which is recognized by many canonical interpreters) but also from the textual reality of compilation-conscious comments within select Old Testament books (which is the refinement Croy is proposing).

By interacting with the relevant scholarship and providing several exegetical case studies, this work advances several strands of the current conversation about the nature of canon formation and canonical hermeneutics. Croy develops here some of the methodological parameters that can help navigate the relationship between composition and canonization in the canon formation process. I am

thankful for Croy's work in this volume and hope many students of the biblical canon consider its claims carefully.

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***Basics of Latin: A Grammar with Readings and Exercises from the Christian Tradition.* By Derek Cooper. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020, 432pp., \$59.99.**

This Latin textbook, written by Derek Cooper and published by Zondervan, has the feel and rhythm of another textbook that is popular in the market—Mounce's *Biblical Greek*. Like Mounce, Cooper offers a similar structure with an engaging curriculum and a grasp of the ecclesiastical tradition of Latin that quickly acquaints his readers with Latin. Cooper explains his justification for a Latin textbook in the Christian tradition in his introduction: the body of Christian literature is greater than that of the classical, even though the classical works are more familiar to the general public.

The layout of the curriculum is straightforward. The first chapter covers nouns, prepositions, and some conjunctions, while also providing the general structure of the language in usage and case system. Vocabulary is key and so a list of prepositions serves as a starting point. The author provides the etymology that the Latin vocabulary serves (or rather, the cognates in the English) to assist with making connections to the English language. It is worth noting that Mounce (the Greek textbook) and Wheelock (another widely used Latin textbook) do not do this but rather prepositions are scattered throughout various chapters.

At the end of each chapter is a reminder that there are exercises in the back of the book under Appendix I: *Exercitia*. Following this appendix is another appendix with a key for those exercises. These exercises try to familiarize students with translating the Latin text. Even with the first chapter, given the minimal amount of Latin, students are encouraged to look at some (very short) expressions

from Genesis. Cooper encourages his readers to look at the English translation. With the key and ample instruction written in the text, it becomes clear that the textbook presents itself as a self-study for the Latin language. It is worth noting that Zondervan offers a DVD-component of the curriculum that is sold separately (\$199); it contains 28 lessons over 5 discs.

After the first chapter, Cooper takes the student through the first declension along with a nice foray into verbs with *sum*, the verb for “being,” as in “I am” or “I exist.” He assures his reader that these terms will be explained later. At the end of the chapter is another reminder that there are exercises in the back of the book, which students are expected to complete.

The third chapter presents the second declension with the fourth chapter presenting the third declension. Students are instructed to parse for case, number, and gender, along with the dictionary entry of the word (lexical form) and the English equivalent. Up until this point, students are given mostly nouns in all three declensions and the difference in form in each of their gender forms. The exercises convey the importance of students’ pace of vocabulary study with fill-in-the-blank sentences.

Chapter five covers adjectives in all three declensions of all three genders. The next two chapters cover fourth and fifth declensions which are common in usage but not as numerous as those in the first three declensions. This concludes part one.

Part two covers the verb system in the indicative mood with tenses that make use of the first two principal parts: present, imperfect, and future—in both active and passive voices. The other tenses will not be covered until part five, but the author is intent on getting students to translate the Latin sentences framed from the basic structure consisting of subject, verb, and object. With nouns addressed in part one and basic verb tenses in part two, students practice translating Latin sentences taken from Christian literature.

Parts three and four provide instruction for irregular verbs and pronouns along with the vocabulary. The frequent usage of these words will help students. Parts five through eight will give the rest of the instruction on verb tenses (perfect, pluperfect, and future perfect), then with participles and moods other than the indicative (imperative, subjunctive, and infinitive).

The pedagogical method overall is sound. Most of the material covered is for the first year of Latin instruction. With more advanced syntax such as conditional clauses, the author directs his readers to consult another grammar text (e.g., see page 191; Allen & Greenough). There are some peculiarities of ecclesiastical Latin that will become noticeable, but by and large, Cooper has covered sufficient material to get students to start with Latin as quickly as they can. Cooper's work is tremendous in its ability to keep students engaged in Latin.

While there are other grammar texts used in theological education such as Collins's *A Primer of Ecclesiastical Latin* and Wheelock's timeless text, Cooper's work offers a unique approach to Latin instruction with copious examples of biblical and patristic literature within each chapter. The book is positioned for self-study, but this curriculum could easily make its way into the classroom setting with additional assignments and tests developed to evaluate the progress of students' acquisition of the language.

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***Politics and the Earthly City in Augustine's City of God.* By Veronica Roberts Ogle. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021, x+201 pp., \$99.00.**

In *Politics and the Earthly City in Augustine's City of God*, Veronica Roberts Ogle, assistant professor of philosophy at Assumption University in Worcester, Massachusetts, argues that Augustine's conception of the earthly city points to a reality beyond itself. Specifically, Augustine's "sacramental grammar" is intended to demonstrate a dual understanding of *civitas terrena* (p. 4). This understanding of the city is directly related to Augustine's semiotics, namely the idea that earthly things serve as signs pointing to God—a view that lies "at the center of Augustine's whole worldview" (p. 4). In this way, Ogle argues against a literalistic reading of Augustine's rendering of the

earthly city, approaching the issue as one of rhetorical device understood best in a sacramental ontology. This sacramental perspective relates to Augustine's "Christianized notion of Platonic participation" (p. 4). Augustine's use of *civitas terrena* is not a capitulation to earthly devices and politics; it is intentional for the purpose of symbolizing the tyrannical nature of the earthly city. Thus, Ogle provides a fresh and convincing argument towards understanding Augustine's rhetorical goals in *City of God*.

Chapter one establishes the foundation by explicating Augustine's view of the earthly city as dominated by *amor sui* (love of self). The logic of the earthly city inevitably leads to evil and ruin. For those who do not love neighbor for the sake of God, disaster is bound to follow. Consequently, for those who dismiss the authority and love of God, their priorities must be oriented towards themselves. The earthly city "is primarily defined by its members' shared attempt to shield themselves from God's love" (p. 28). Pride is the ultimate barrier to understanding true happiness in God, a story recast throughout history beginning with Satan's rejection of God's sovereignty (p. 33). Augustine consistently "[deflates] all of the earthly city's claims" and thereby demonstrates the inglorious nature of the world and its forfeiture of true power found in God alone. Ogle moves into chapter 2 with a focus on Augustine's rendering of pride as the primary cause of Rome's fall. Augustine must "convince [his readers] that there is a facet of reality beyond the imperial sights of Rome" (p. 44). Augustine, as Ogle indicates, does not unnecessarily disparage Rome but takes pains to "highlight the gap between Rome and the truly Just City" for the sake of instruction (p. 48). Augustine reinterprets the history of Rome with Christ as "the unabashed protagonist" who is at work towards renewal and transformation (p. 51). While Rome lauds mercy and justice, their history indicates otherwise. Thus, Christ is extolled as the truly just and merciful one. A culture of heroism and competition can only breed pride and love of self; a culture of sacrifice and deference breeds love of God and love of neighbor.

In chapter three, Ogle advances the psychagogic element of his rhetoric, seeking to provide a way towards healing by exposing faulty worldviews. Hence, Augustine creates a cognitive dissonance according to Ogle by leaving his readers "no way to solve the problem of

amor sui on their own” (p. 69). Here the way of happiness according to the world is exposed and the way of politics by Rome’s standards left wanting. Only Christianity can fulfill the promises made by philosophy and politics. Chapter four builds further upon the argument by exposing Augustine’s political pessimism by positing the need for humility as the way forward. Roman history was replete with examples of those who feigned desire for justice, whether King Tarquin of Rome or those who overthrew him. Ogle notes that for Augustine, “the patterns of behavior in which Rome was trapped could only really have been reversed by its members’ willingness to give up their desire for preeminence” (p. 113). Hence, for those seeking the flourishing of the early city and the promotion of virtues, Christianity was the “better religion for the *ciuitas*” (p. 115)

Chapters five and six bring Augustine’s sacramental worldview to bear on the question. Ogle highlights Augustine’s word-centered view of the world, with Scripture as the primary revelation of knowledge and all creation pointing as signs to the divine reality. Hence, the theory of signs presented in Augustine’s *De Doctrina Christiana* serves as the “sacramental worldview of the City of God, only viewed from another angle” (p. 128). Only through meditating upon Scripture with the eyes of faith can one see the fallacy of *amor sui*. The love of God (*amor Dei*) was “the original meaning of the creation” and demonstrates that the “cosmos is governed by an economy of gift” (p. 135). Politics *per se* are not the issue; it is politics governed by love of self. Hence, Augustine asserts that the earthly city “points us toward the Church as the community in which humility’s font, *amor Dei*, is best nurtured” (p. 181).

Ogle gives readers a well-argued and readable text. While resting on the shoulders of previous work and current conversations, Ogle’s work stands on its own. It should be read by those working in Augustine’s political theology, as well as those who are concerned with the latest research on *City of God*. Students and scholars alike will find much in Ogle’s text to enhance their reading of *City of God* and their appreciation of Augustine’s theology contained therein.

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***Retrieving Augustine's Doctrine of Creation: Ancient Wisdom for Current Controversy.* By Gavin Ortlund. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2020, 264pp., \$30.00.**

The doctrine of creation has received consistent attention throughout the history of the church. It has been intensified over the past 150 years following the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, and the subsequent scientific and Christian responses to that work. Within the span of the twentieth century, conservative Christians have challenged the place of evolution within a biblical doctrine of creation. The purpose of this review is not to highlight all of those responses, but rather to focus on one recent entry into the conversation. In his *Retrieving Augustine's Doctrine of Creation: Ancient Wisdom for Current Controversy*, Gavin Ortlund proposes that we look back in order to move forward in this discussion, specifically engaging the thought and work of Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD). Ortlund embarks upon a retrieval project in order to address modern questions on historical Adam and evolution debates. Augustine is the perfect conversation partner for this debate, as Ortlund asserts, because "the doctrine of creation is at the very heart of Augustine's Christian faith, his pastoral vocation, and the overall shape of his theology" (p. 2). Thus, the doctrine of creation was highly personal to Augustine and informed much of his thought and even spirituality. Ortlund accesses Augustine's main writings on creation, particularly his commentaries on Genesis, but also the discussion of creation within his *Confessions* and *The City of God*. This data serves as the main coordinates throughout the text to help readers see and understand the depth of thought Augustine gave to the doctrine of creation, and its value for today.

Chapters one through four are dedicated to understanding different facets of Augustine's doctrine of creation and putting them in conversation with some of the modern-day discussions around evolution and creation. Ortlund demonstrates consistent reliance upon the primary source, yet not in an effort to proof text, but in an effort to work constructively with Augustine's thought. This is not a full treatise on Augustine's doctrine of creation, but it is tapping into the mainstream of Augustine's thoughts on creation within his main texts on the subject in order to bring to bear helpful historical insights

on contemporary discussions. The main take away from Augustine is that his doctrine of creation was multi-faceted and multi-perspectival. Thus, the main virtue for approaching this conversation, according to Augustine, is humility. Ortlund does well in drawing out the implications of this thought in Augustine's work for our modern consideration. Particularly, he works through Augustine's so-called literal interpretation of Genesis as well as Augustine's view on animal death prior to the fall. On these issues and more, Ortlund notes that Augustine was "patient of having multiple interpretations of difficult passages" based on his desire to discern the spiritual consequences of different thoughts (p. 97).

The final chapter draws all prior discussion into conversations on the historical Adam and evolution. This much debated topic is carefully discussed, interacting with contemporary scholars and theologians while weaving Augustine's thought into the thorny bits of the debate. While some claim Augustine as a champion for evolution, others claim him as a stalwart of Adam's historicity contra evolution. The final consensus by Ortlund is that Augustine cannot be contained in either box but rather he "retains a surprising degree of flexibility with respect to interpreting particular details in Genesis 2-3" (p. 239). In this chapter Ortlund summarizes three ways in which Augustine can be brought into modern debates on evolution and the historical Adam. He calls these three "instincts" (1. Evolution, therefore, no Adam; 2. Adam, therefore no evolution; 3. Adam *and* evolution). Ortlund is careful not to suggest that Augustine lends himself firmly to any one view, but his epistemic humility provides a much-needed corrective in debates that can tend to demonize the other and champion one's own view as the only possible answer to the question. If one were to categorize his thoughts on the subject, Ortlund concludes that Augustine is "favorable to harmonization efforts in the realm of instinct three" (p. 239).

Retrieving Augustine's Doctrine of Creation is an accessible text in order to enter the mind of Augustine on creation for the specific purpose of addressing contemporary discussions. Bringing voices from the "*congregatio fidelium*" of the past (as Karl Barth has described it) to bear on contemporary theology is part of the work of theological retrieval—a significant concern for Ortlund in his writing—and should be a concern for all evangelical thinkers as we continue to

do theology in the twenty-first century. This text, as Ortlund has described, is “an attempt to hear, and help others hear, a voice from within that *congregatio* that must not be ignored” (p. 8). This text can easily be added into courses on theological anthropology, the doctrine of creation, current issues on science and the Bible, and can serve as a good conversation partner for those wishing to engage in the debate on evolution and historical Adam. While Ortlund does not presume expert knowledge of Augustine’s thought, a proper introduction to Augustine may be a pre-requisite before engaging this text. For the purpose it was intended to serve, Ortlund’s work is commendable and worthy of the reader’s time.

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***You Need a Better Gospel: Reclaiming the Good News of Participation with Christ.* By Klyne R. Snodgrass. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022, 190 pp., \$22.99.**

In *You Need a Better Gospel: Reclaiming the Good News of Participation with Christ*, Klyne Snodgrass adds to the growing conversation among scholars and writers related to the need for a more comprehensive definition for “the gospel.” This conversation begins with an assumption that the current definition for the gospel within evangelical circles is “deficient, inept, and inert” and that what is passed along as the gospel is “neither compelling nor taken seriously” (pp. 3-4). Snodgrass’s comments echo recent works by Scot McKnight (*The King Jesus Gospel*, 2016), Bill Hull (*Conversion and Discipleship*, 2016), and Matthew Bates (*Gospel Allegiance*, 2019), all of whom challenge the church to present a gospel message that goes beyond the basic plan of salvation and focuses on a life intimately engaged with God through his Son. Snodgrass refers to this message as the “gospel of participation” (p. 8).

In the opening chapter, Snodgrass begins to deconstruct a prevailing gospel, what he refers to as a “simplified...message about saying

the right words so you can go to heaven, even though the Bible has relatively little focus on going to heaven” (p. 9). While not denying the importance of the conversion experience, the author contends that the gospel goes beyond a single prayer or a cathartic moment of confession. He reconstructs the meaning of the gospel by connecting it to the disciple’s “ongoing life with God...characterized by participation with, solidarity with, and attachment to Christ” (pp. 11-12). Faith, then, goes beyond agreement with certain beliefs or doctrinal positions, or even commitment to transcendent truth; along with these ideas, the biblical concept of faith in both the Old and New Testaments has a relational quality indicating “trust... loyalty...and allegiance” (p. 13). According to Snodgrass, the gospel is an invitation into a life of participation with Christ, “where life is engaged and experienced, not merely observed” (p. 23).

In chapter two, Snodgrass offers a historical apology for the gospel of participation. He cites several biblical scholars and authors—both contemporaneous and from the recent past—who have affirmed a participatory gospel. Moving backwards, the author quotes Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, and other church fathers, reformers, and Christian movement leaders to demonstrate that “nearly all great Christian thinkers have emphasized participation” (p. 31). After establishing the historical lineage of his proposal, Snodgrass proposes several reasons why this gospel has failed to make an impact in the present day. He admits his suggestions are speculative; there is no definitive answer as to why this understanding of the gospel is not widely preached and taught. Perhaps, he says, “the cost is too high” (p. 32).

Chapter three provides a fuller discourse on the concept of participation. Herein, the author identifies significant biblical terms related to the act of participation in the life of Christ. He points to terms such as “in Christ,” “with Christ,” and “abiding/remaining” in the New Testament, as well as Old Testament terms like “cling/hold fast,” “join to,” and “covenant.” Snodgrass contends that the Bible is rife with direct and indirect teaching promoting a life of faith in which God’s people are actively participating (engagement, obedience) with the Lord as he oversees their transformation into the image of Christ.

Over the remainder of Snodgrass’s work, he systematically works through the biblical evidence for the gospel of participation. He

starts with foundational Old Testament texts including the story of Abraham and the exodus of God's children from Egypt to the Promised Land. Moving on, the author highlights relevant passages from the Psalms and Major Prophets (Jeremiah, Isaiah), focusing on the role of God's covenant plan with Israel, as he called them through his leaders and prophets to live out a faithful relationship with him: "in other words, participation with God" (p. 70). Snodgrass then examines the Synoptic Gospels as a unit and explores the Gospel and Letters of John to identify the teaching and example of Jesus as He called his disciples into a kingdom community with one another and into a progressively intimate relationship with him. According to the author's interpretation of *pistis*, faith is a participative activity on the part of the disciple who believes "into" Jesus rather than simply believing "in" Jesus, which creates a "movement into a close association with Jesus, a commitment to, an attachment to, and a participation with him" (p. 95).

The author's treatment of Paul's writings focuses on a handful of well-known passages in his epistles, all of which speak to the application of the gospel of participation and lead to the conclusion that participation is the point of salvation. As he walks through 2 Corinthians 5:14-6:4, Ephesians 2:4-10; Romans 6:1-14; and 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, Snodgrass identifies words and phrases that reflect the believer's participation in the plan of salvation. In the process, the author skirts around the edges of reformed theology without veering out of bounds: "Salvation is totally the work of God in which we are totally involved" (p. 113).

You Need a Better Gospel certainly affirms the author's thesis that "Christian faith is about participation with God" (p. 8). Even in the short form of less than 200 pages, Snodgrass constructs a convincing and consistent (albeit at times repetitive) argument for seeing the gospel as an interactive and engaging life with God, in Christ. Recent authors have identified the need for an understanding of the gospel that is wider and deeper than one moment of conversion and one that challenges believers to a lifetime of discipleship. Although "participation" may not be the most inspirational descriptor, the word is nonetheless accessible for any audience.

Accessible is also the word one can apply to Snodgrass's entire presentation. His writing style and method targets a wide audience

of readers from scholars to students and pastors to pew-sitters. Some may criticize his lack of attention to doctrinal precision; there is little direct engagement with key theological concepts such as justification, adoption, substitution, or glorification. However, the author speaks to the essence of these ideas within his discussion. Snodgrass closes the book with a nod to application by offering four “requirements” for inculcating participation in the life the believer and the church (pp. 168-171). Each offering is relevant and practical, yet missing is any suggestion related to body life or establishing community. This area would seem important to developing a reflection of spiritual participation among disciples within the church. Aside from these observations, *You Need a Better Gospel* is an intriguing addition to an important discussion we must have about the meaning of the gospel and its implications for making disciples who move from conversion to “participatory” discipleship in a seamless process.

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***Between Dixie and Zion: Southern Baptists and Palestine before Israel.* By Walker Robins. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2020, 235pp., \$49.95.**

There are few things as exciting to a historian as discovering a surprising historical anecdote. Many good works of history have begun with the discovery of a seeming historical oddity in an archive or finding an intriguing anecdote that opens a vista to the unexpected. Walker Robins begins *Between Dixie and Zion: Southern Baptists and Palestine before Israel* with a story that may prove surprising to modern Southern Baptists. He describes the 1948 Southern Baptist Convention where messengers overwhelmingly voted against motions that called for the SBC to commend Harry S. Truman – himself a Southern Baptist – for his official recognition of the newly proclaimed state of Israel.

Historic Southern Baptist refusal to support the new Jewish state

may come as a shock to modern readers. It certainly does not square with modern scholarship that often presents evangelicals as a unified pro-Israeli voting bloc. Recent scholarship has made much of the connection of American evangelicals and the Israeli state (e.g., Samuel Goldman's *God's Country: Christian Zionism in America* and Daniel Hummel's *Covenant Brothers: Evangelicals, Jews, and U.S.-Israeli Relations*). Robins challenges simplistic characterizations of evangelical support of Israel with an in-depth examination of diverse Southern Baptist approaches to Palestine in the Mandate Era (1923-1948).

Robins asserts that polarized categories of pro-Zionist and pro-Arab are alien to the diverse realities of Southern Baptist interpretations of (and interventions in) Mandate Palestine. Robins also challenges monocausal representations of Southern Baptist attitudes towards Palestine based on a premillennial dispensationalist eschatology. Rather than cramming historical figures into tidy political or theological camps, Robins examines the diverse "types of encounters" through which Southern Baptists interpreted Mandate Palestine. He demonstrates that Southern Baptists reflected a variety of opinions on political and cultural matters in Palestine.

The driving impulse in Southern Baptist interest in Palestine was not Zionism or Arab nationalism but the spread of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Reaching Palestine for Christ was the fundamental goal of Southern Baptists, although this could be expressed in pro-Zionist or pro-Arab language by different Southern Baptists. Robins argues that Southern Baptists displayed "Orientalist" interpretations of Mandate Palestine. In so doing, he is drawing on Edward Said's influential work *Orientalism* (1978), which critiqued Western perceptions of "the East." Robins asserts that most Southern Baptist commentators reflected "Orientalist" assumptions pitting the "backwards" Arabs against the modern Zionists. This did not always reflect an embrace of political Zionism, but Robins shows Southern Baptist affinity for the "Western" ways of Zionists.

Between Dixie and Zion explores an ambitious range of Southern Baptist engagement with Mandate Palestine. Robins begins by introducing three lenses through which Southern Baptists interpreted Palestine: missions, biblical prophecy, and pilgrimage/tourism. He follows this with chapters examining the travel writings of Southern

Baptists and missionary engagement in Palestine. Chapter three is noteworthy, as it tells the story of the first Baptist missionaries in Palestine: Shukri and Munira Mosa. Shukri Mosa was a Palestinian Arab who was converted under the influence of Southwestern Seminary president L. R. Scarborough whom he met while peddling Holy Land souvenirs in Texas. Mosa founded the first major Baptist work in Palestine and for many years served as the primary voice to Southern Baptists on the behalf of missions in Palestine. Chapters five through nine focus on SBC engagement with the “Palestine question” in the United States. Chapters five and six detail the life and work of Jacob Gartenhaus, the first SBC Home Mission Board missionary commissioned to evangelize Jewish Americans, and the work of the Woman’s Missionary Union that supported Gartenhaus in his efforts and publicized the work of SBC missionaries in Palestine. Chapters seven through nine explore the growth of premillennial dispensationalism in the SBC and the closely connected career of J. Frank Norris as well as the pushback from those who rejected Norris’s marriage of premillennialism and Zionism. Robins shows that dispensational eschatology was influential but not the driving force in Southern Baptist attitudes towards Israel. Robins analyzes Truman in his final chapter, and he argues that Truman’s support of the formation of the state of Israel synthesized the “politically expedient” with Truman’s “faith and instincts” (p. 148).

Robins bookends his work with the rejected motions celebrating Israeli statehood in 1948 and a 2002 SBC resolution supporting “the right of Israel to exist as a sovereign state” (p. 159). The concluding chapter provides a brief dash through theological developments within the SBC from 1948 to the present. This short summary of decades of change includes broad-brush statements and unsupported claims. This, however, does not detract from the diligent work reflected in the bulk of this book. It demonstrates the need for further work on theological development in the SBC in the twentieth century. Historians of religion will find much commendable in this short book, especially those with an interest in Baptist history. Robins treats his historical subjects as real human beings. He allows for individual inconsistency, and he does not enforce foreign categories onto historical actors. Furthermore, Robins writes well. He remembers that history is done best when it tells a story. The

story of “Southern Baptists and Palestine before Israel” is a story worth recovering.

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***Preaching Life-Changing Sermons: Six Steps to Developing and Delivering Biblical Messages.* By Jesse L. Nelson. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2022, 143pp., \$16.99.**

Desiring to assist preachers in the tasks of sermon preparation and delivery, Jesse Nelson magnifies the life-changing capacity of preaching and offers six practical steps for sermon preparation and delivery. As Robert Smith Jr. notes in the book’s Foreword, Nelson writes with a hermeneutic of assumption. The assumption is that “pulpit work” begins with the perspective that the biblical text undergirds both the development and delivery of a sermon. Addressing the need for yet another preaching book, Nelson identifies five reasons for readers to take up and read this volume. Two of those reasons focus on African-American preaching and preachers. Nelson notes that his book includes information on African-American preachers, a subject missing in most preaching books, and that it treats some nuances of African-American preaching. The remaining three reasons center on his desire to bring the seminary classroom to the pastor’s study through a practical and simplified approach for sermon preparation and delivery.

Arguing that the way to avoid preaching confusing sermons is to preach the text of Scripture, Nelson proposes six distinct steps in six chapters which are intended to facilitate preaching of text-based, life-changing sermons. The six steps are: seek the Spirit, select your Scripture, study the Scripture, structure your sermon, speak in the Spirit, and share the Savior. Within each chapter, Nelson includes personal illustrations, a profile of a preacher who models the particular step well and words of wisdom from a preacher on the implementation of the step.

The emphasis in the first chapter on the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching is a refreshing reminder. After appropriately identifying the Spirit as the author of Scripture, Nelson challenges the reader to seek the Spirit through prayer, expressing his conviction that it is the most neglected discipline for preachers. In the following chapter, the matter of Scripture selection is addressed. Here, the author's five reasons for preaching through books of the Bible are illuminating and merit careful consideration from all who are tasked with a preaching assignment.

In a chapter devoted to the study of Scripture, Nelson addresses the elements of observation, interpretation, and application as a part of the exegesis of a preaching text. Additionally, a striking strength of the book, given its stated practical and introductory focus, is his section on preaching from different Bible genres. Preachers, both veterans and novices, often are guilty of imposing "three points and a poem" on every text of Scripture. Heeding Nelson's advice can alleviate the peril of genre insensitivity. The book's fourth chapter treats the matter of the structuring of one's sermon. The reader will find accurate guidance with reference to the understanding and development of the sermon's main idea. Ideally, Nelson notes, it should be a single sentence that includes both subject and complement. After offering helpful insights relating to the functional elements of the sermon body (explanation, illustration and application), he addresses variations of sermon structures. The proposed variations, while helpful and consistent with text-based preaching, do not reflect the text-driven approach of letting the text itself dictate the structure of the sermon.

The final two chapters of the book include practical principles for sermon delivery and for extending a biblical invitation. Exhorting readers to deliver their messages in the power of the Holy Spirit, Nelson's treatment of the Spirit's anointing is commendable and noteworthy, given that it is neglected in most preaching texts. Additionally, his three steps for being a Spirit-filled preacher (asking, believing, and complying) exemplify the many practical and applicable insights which pepper this book. Regarding the use of notes or manuscripts in sermon delivery, this reviewer would have preferred a greater emphasis on the need for delivery with few or no notes. Nonetheless, the author's commitment to Spirit-filled preaching is

clear. In particular, the reader will benefit from sustained reflection on Robert Smith's primer for sermon delivery. Nelson's inclusion of it serves to remind readers of one of the many key contributions of historic African-American preaching. The book's final chapter is devoted to a discussion of sharing an effective gospel invitation. In his emphasis on sharing the Savior, Nelson rightly observes that, while expository preaching is Christ-centered, the preacher should not bend every Scripture toward Christ. Rather, the goal is to reveal Christ in the Scripture. Ideally, the invitation itself should reflect and flow out of the content of the passage one preaches. Then, once the transition from sermon to invitation is accomplished, the preacher also may desire to include personal testimony as a part of his concluding remarks.

Finally, while the author does include basic resources for a preaching library in the third chapter, a more extensive bibliography, with a particular focus on expository preaching texts, would be a helpful addition to the book. Nelson does offer helpful guidance for beginning preachers through three appendices which contain examples of sermon outlines and sermons. Ultimately, he accomplishes his objective in writing this volume. His emphases on solid biblical content and effective delivery will serve well both the beginning and veteran preacher.

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***Luke-Acts in Modern Interpretation.* Edited by Stanley E. Porter and Ron C. Fay. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2021, 392pp., \$31.99.**

This is the second volume in the Milestones in New Testament Scholarship series, edited by Stanley E. Porter and Ron C. Fay. Porter is president and professor of New Testament at McMaster Divinity College; Fay is assistant professor of biblical studies at Liberty University. Their series aims to provide books about significant

scholars and their impact on specific New Testament books and topics (p. 9). The editors decided on which Lukan scholar to focus each chapter. Their criteria were: (1) the scholars have made a significant impact on Luke-Acts studies; and (2) they have a complete or nearly finished body of writing. In other words, they have either “died or concluded the vast bulk of their careers” (p. 18).

1. *Humanizing*. With the extended biographical information about each scholar, this book helps to put a human face on these ten major scholars. One might already know Adolf Harnack denied Jesus’ preexistence, miracles, and deity (p. 64), but how did it affect him personally? His Lutheran denomination considered him *persona non grata* and did not let him evaluate how well prepared his students were for ministry (p. 70). His father, a longtime university theology professor, wrote him a letter saying no Christian could hold Adolf’s position on Jesus’s resurrection, and they never mended their personal estrangement (pp. 58, 69).

F. F. Bruce wrote his excellent commentary on the Greek text of Acts under difficult conditions: his long stays in British air raid shelters during World War II (p. 198). Well-known scholar C. K. Barrett believed his first calling was as a Methodist preacher. He had a vibrant preaching ministry throughout his career. He also had a dry sense of humor (p. 272).

It was interesting when the chapter writer had a personal encounter with his or her subject. Stanley Porter heard F. F. Bruce speak at a lecture and seminar, and Porter gave some insightful observations (pp. 194-95). While a Ph.D. student, John Bryon had several encounters with C. K. Barrett (p. 272). However, most writers in this book had no personal connection with their subject. Most of the biographical sections were well written, but some were surprisingly short (chapters 4, 9-11).

2. *Nuancing*. This book can help one take a nuanced view about Luke-Acts scholars to avoid generalizations. For instance, Harnack was a prolific writer who influenced many scholars in the classic liberalism of his day (pp. 57, 63-63). Yet, he espoused the traditional authorship of Luke and Acts: Luke the physician from Antioch who joined Paul on parts of his second and third missionary journeys (pp. 76-82)—conservative views still positively impacting scholars today. Conversely, F. F. Bruce, who helped revive evangelical biblical

scholarship in England and had many biblically conservative views, held some beliefs that were not as traditional (p. 193). He thought evolution was compatible with Genesis, assumed a late date for the book of Daniel, and believed the book of Isaiah had multiple authors (p. 242).

3. *Interconnectedness.* The individual chapters, as well as in the Introduction and Conclusion, help the reader to see where these ten scholars fit chronologically in the last two hundred years and learn how they all built upon their predecessors. Often, they started work in new directions. Of course, some new ideas never took hold, such as those of Richard Pervo (p. 346). The Introduction was excellent, giving the chronological and theological setting for each of the ten scholars (pp. 17-55).

4. *Suggested Improvements.* The inclusion of many of the scholars appearing in this volume is justified, but some choices are questionable. The editors admit that their choice was subjective (p. 14), but one wishes they had included I. Howard Marshall and Darrell L. Bock. Bock may still produce more scholarly works on Luke-Acts, but he has already published an impressive amount. The influence of both men is evident in the number of times they are mentioned in the Author Index (pp. 393, 396). It would help to keep the chapter lengths more comparable. The two shortest chapters also had some of the briefest biographies (chapters 4, 9). Lengthening them would better fit the purpose of the book and help the reader better learn about the scholar. Numbering the chapters would help, but for the purpose of this review, this writer counts the Introduction as chapter one. The Scripture Index and Author Index are helpful. Adding a Subject Index would also be beneficial. Since the Conclusion was just a brief version of the Introduction, adding some connections with current Luke-Acts scholarship would benefit the reader (pp. 381-89).

Porter and Fay's volume fulfills its stated purpose of each chapter fitting in between a dictionary or encyclopedia entry and a biography of a Luke-Acts scholar (p. 10). It is helpful for master's and doctoral students as well as other scholars in providing information that is more than cursory but less than an entire book about a scholar. A good history of interpretive milestones in Luke-Acts studies for the last two hundred years, this book is a great help in showing how these ten particular scholars intersect.

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***The Book of Acts as Story: A Narrative-Critical Study.* By David R. Bauer. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021, 304pp., \$32.99.**

David R. Bauer serves at Asbury Theological Seminary as dean of the School of Biblical Interpretation and Ralph Waldo Beeson Professor of Inductive Bible Studies. His expertise is narrative criticism, which applies the tools of studying literature to the Bible. In this volume he presents a sustained narrative-critical examination of Acts to prove: (A) Jesus is the dominant character; (B) Acts presents a consistent message; and (C) narrative criticism can give insights and answer questions not possible from historical criticism (p. 3).

In the first three chapters Bauer explains narrative criticism and shows how this interpretive method is the best one for studying Acts. He defines terms that are important in this process, such as: character, plot, and author. Although these may seem easy to understand, they can get complicated. So, his clear explanations are helpful for terms such as: (A) the narrative world versus the real world (p. 13); (B) types and purposes of characters (pp. 26-27); and (C) the five points of view one encounters in the text (pp. 38-44).

1. *Aspects of this Study.* The next four chapters are section-by-section narrative analyses of Acts with highlights of certain verses and words. The commentary section follows. For a model on how to apply narrative criticism, Bauer does a fine job in this sustained approach. He mentions many figures of speech, such as irony (e.g., pp. 102, 177, 195, 199), hyperbole (p. 132), and litotes (pp. 44, 201). He points out examples of rhetorical structures, such as flashback (pp. 135, 198) and *inclusio* (a bookending literary technique, pp. 63, 242). He is adept at comparing and contrasting elements within successive narrative material or speeches, such as anticipatory introductions (p. 50) and redundancies (pp. 46, 155). He effectively demonstrates how Luke maintains a consistent message throughout Acts. Along

the way, Bauer sometimes contrasts views in order to help the reader better understand what he claims (pp. 169, 197, 236). Surprisingly, Bauer says little about the “we” sections in Acts (16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-37; 28:1-16), which should be a goldmine to a narrative critic (p. 36). Similarly, this volume pays the least attention to the last major section in Acts, 19:21-28:31 (pp. 217-48). The book needs a subject appendix. For instance, if a reader wants to know where Bauer found the use of *inclusio* in Acts, the only viable option other than a complete re-read of the book is to search an electronic copy.

2. *Benefits of this Study.* What are some benefits in a narrative-critical approach to Acts? Here are six. First, its primary focus is on the biblical text. Bauer mostly ignored how the text came to its final form and simply dealt with canonical Acts. Second, it helps clarify what tradition may otherwise obscure. For instance, Acts 13:1-19:20 deals with just two missionary journeys. There is no break between what we traditionally call the second and third journeys (p. 169). Third, new and helpful perspectives arise, such as the realization that Luke treats the church at Antioch almost like a character (pp. 162-64). Fourth, one discovers the major themes and emphases Luke carefully weaves throughout the book (p. 63). Fifth, understanding spatial point of view gives helpful insight: in Ephesus there is a shift of focus from Paul to other workers, showing the gospel is not dependent upon any one person doing ministry, regardless of how great he or she is (pp. 215-16). Sixth, one finds the thirty-six speeches in Acts are an integral part of the narrative and should not be examined apart from it (p. 63). Luke uses the speeches to drive the story forward (p. 65). Bauer effectively identifies the category of many of the speeches, such as farewell (p. 223), defensive (p. 227), and forensic (p. 237). He gives some helpful speech outline charts (pp. 208, 222) as well as section charts (pp. 180, 215), but more of both kinds of charts would benefit the reader.

3. *Limits of this Study.* Although Bauer claims to employ only narrative criticism (p. 3), he sometimes employs historical criticism, which is a better way to interpret Scripture. This reviewer believes narrative criticism alone is a deficient method of biblical study since it is synchronic, ignoring history and setting. Also, it can lead to overreaching speculation. For instance, did Luke omit charges against Jesus in his Gospel in order to put them in Acts in regard to Stephen’s

martyrdom (p. 119)? Yet, narrative criticism is a helpful methodology when used carefully, as Bauer often does in this study. Expanding the commentary section (only 181 pages) would improve the book and give the reader more examples of Bauer’s interpretation of the biblical text.

Bauer writes clearly about a subject he has mastered over decades of study. His book is helpful for pastors, undergraduate and seminary students, and teachers as a judicious example of using narrative criticism on the book of Acts. He does not allow this interpretive method to undermine or ignore the traditional interpretation of the text; rather, he demonstrates narrative criticism also can be a legitimate interpretive method.

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***The Mission of the Triune God: A Theology of Acts.* By Patrick Schreiner. Wheaton: Crossway, 2022, 179 pp., \$23.99.**

Students of the Bible have long valued the book of Acts for its historical presentation of the spread of the gospel as it overcomes geographical, ethnic, and religious boundaries. Undoubtedly, increased appreciation for the ministries of the Apostles—specifically Peter and Paul—is a natural overflow of any reading of Acts. The historical moniker “Acts of the Apostles” is case in point. Fewer readers of Acts, however, exult in the *theology* of Acts, perhaps because of the transitional and programmatic nature of Luke’s narrative.

Patrick Schreiner recognizes these important truths, yet his purpose in *The Mission of the Triune God* is to focus on the theology of Acts by drawing together several themes from Luke’s narrative. In fact, Schreiner identifies seven themes “to summarize Luke’s main theological aims” and to demonstrate that “Acts is about God, the God who continues his mission to glorify himself by blessing the nations through his chosen people” (p. 27). These themes are integrated, but they also build upon each other throughout the narrative.

The mission of the Triune God is foundational to understanding the theology of Acts. Chapter one establishes the work of God the Father, orchestrating the “action” of the narrative according to his plan to multiply the Word and advance his kingdom. Chapter two focuses on the Son, the risen and ascended Lord who gives life and rules over all. Chapter three shows how the Spirit—the promise of the Father and the Son—comes to extend the mission of Jesus’ exaltation by saving, recreating, and reconciling a new people and a new kingdom community.

The theological themes of chapters four through seven build upon the trinitarian foundation. Specifically, the mission of the Triune God in Acts is exhibited in the multiplication of the Word, the dissemination of the gospel message of salvation to “all flesh” (from Jews to Gentiles to barbarians), the establishing of the church as the new people of God, and the mission of believers to be witnesses for Christ to the end of the earth.

Schreiner’s writing is accessible and enjoyable—it isn’t often that a serious work in biblical theology includes contemporary cultural references (from Kanye West to Gustav Holst) that set up theological emphases. The accessibility, however, does not betray the academic and pastoral vigor that Schreiner demonstrates in tracing the theological themes of Acts. As such, *The Mission of the Triune God* is a valuable supplement for preparation in preaching through Acts, but also a helpful catalyst for deeper study and engagement with the narrative of Acts and its theology.

One of twenty volumes in a series on New Testament Theology by Crossway, Schreiner’s contribution faithfully executes the overall purpose and aim. As stated by editors Thomas R. Schreiner (Patrick’s father) and Brian S. Rosner—both noted biblical theologians in their own right—this series is a project in biblical theology that includes historical and literary dimensions of the biblical text but focuses on the theological emphases in view of the Bible’s overarching narrative and Christocentric focus (p. 13). Readers will benefit from Schreiner’s achievement of these goals for the book of Acts in *The Mission of the Triune God*.

For example, Schreiner adeptly weaves together the Old Testament teachings of Exodus, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel, and Psalms (and more) into the progressive tapestry of God’s mission to form a people for

himself, ultimately in the Church, through the person and work of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Acts does not exist in a theological vacuum, but rather fulfills and propels the Old Testament witness to God's mission in the world.

Essential to Schreiner's thesis is that Acts is a renewal document: "a model, a prototype, an exemplar for the renewal of the church" (p. 20). By renewal, Schreiner correctly defends the ongoing work and witness of the church to the nations after Luke concludes Acts 28. Jesus rules and reigns now through the church, and the commission to be his witnesses (empowered by the Holy Spirit) has not ceased after the activity of the early church recorded by Luke. The theology of Acts establishes this reality, as the Word *continues* to multiply, and the kingdom of God *steadily* advances (even in the face of persecution). Schreiner writes to encourage the contemporary church not to forget, or lack faithfulness to, the mission of the Triune God until Jesus returns.

Certainly, other themes could be included and more could be said about the theology of Acts than Schreiner has articulated. Readers will be hard-pressed, however, to find a clearer, more concise treatment of a biblical theology of Acts than this work. *The Mission of the Triune God* is a notable contribution and a commendable resource for any theological and pastoral library.

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***What Does It Mean to Be a Thoughtful Christian?* By David S. Dockery. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2022, xiii+108pp., \$9.99.**

Christians in the twenty-first century are facing many unwelcome challenges in the secular world. Christians need to ask fresh questions about how to think wisely in order to stand firm based on the revelation of God. The title of this work points out the fundamental and foundational question concerning how to live in the world in a Christian manner. David S. Dockery, distinguished professor of theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, in a timely manner, unfolds another fine book pertaining to the Christian worldview.

Beginning with the focus of the book, by “thinking deeply or carefully or reflectively about things,” says Dockery, “we will explore what it means for thoughtful Christians to ‘think Christianly,’ to love God with our minds” (p. 4). While rejecting both the ideas of being “thoughtful without being Christian” and being “Christian without being thoughtful,” Dockery emphasizes that Christians need to commit themselves not only with hearts and souls but with their minds as well (pp. 9-10).

In the rest of the chapters, Dockery develops a list of eight large thinking and acting categories for living out a Christian framework in a thoughtful manner. Above all, thoughtful Christians recognize all true knowledge flows “from the one Creator to his one creation” by a concept of “faith thinking” (p. 16). Christian reason and thinking provide a genuine interpretive framework to all knowledge and experience in the world, which is called “the pattern of Christian truth” (p. 22). Dockery presents five important doctrines with a concise but rich articulation, which include creation, humanity and the fall, salvation in Christ, the Holy Spirit, and eschatology (pp. 23-28).

Based on this pattern of Christian truth, believers are urged to adopt a “Christian worldview,” which, following Graham Cole, is presented as “a comprehensive life system, shaped by Scripture and influenced by key Christian doctrines, as well as the Christian intellectual tradition,” which seeks to answer the basic questions of life (p. 33). Dockery maintains that God himself in the revelation of Christ is the framework through which Christ followers see, talk,

and act by the power of the Holy Spirit. In accordance with this Christian framework, the Bible serves as the supreme authority for the foundation of the pattern of Christian truth (p. 43). In addition to affirming biblical authority, thoughtful Christians have always valued the Christian intellectual tradition and a commitment to education and cultural engagement (p. 49). As a result, Christian thinking embraces a holistic approach to both theological fields and general academic disciplines (pp. 58-59).

This Christian framework points to a harmonious pathway for thoughtful Christians to be, to live, and to serve faithfully in the church, culture, and the world (pp. 73-76). In this regard, Dockery says, “Reflective Christian thinking therefore points to ethics” (p. 66). In addition, thoughtful Christians also seek to reflect kindness, consideration, wisdom, humility, and hope (pp. 67-68).

Thoughtful Christians are the people of God who live by the authoritative Word of God. This simple but profound statement connotes that thoughtful Christians know how to think faithfully and biblically, valuing the Christian intellectual tradition and a Christian worldview. I gladly recommend this fine work which is grounded in the truth that Jesus Christ “is before all things, and in Him all things hold together” (Col 1:17).

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