

From the President

Dear *Birmingham Theological Journal* Readers,

It is with great excitement that I welcome you to the inaugural edition of the *Birmingham Theological Journal*! This journal is the product of many months of labor from the BTS Research and Writing Center. I'm so excited that you finally have the opportunity to hold this journal in your hands or read it online! At BTS, our goal is to provide faithful and accessible theological education for students everywhere so that they might serve the Kingdom through the local church. Therefore, our program is uniquely suited to train men and women to serve God in appropriate callings where the Lord has planted them. We are often looking for ways in which we can bring our dispersed students together, so that, while all our students are not residentially gathered, they might be spiritually and intellectually gathered. This journal represents one of those opportunities.

In addition, we hope that the journal will also reflect the unique composition of BTS students and faculty. The vast majority of our students and faculty are deeply engaged in local ministry through the church or nonprofit organizations or through lay leadership in the local church. At BTS, we strive to maintain the academic distinctions that belong to graduate education, and particularly, the biblical standards of confessional, Reformed, and orthodox theology. Many seminaries and divinity schools have their own journals that do an excellent job of reflecting the core identity and distinctives of their educational programs, and we hope this journal will do the same, while also integrating ministry concerns and issues. Why? The vast majority of BTS students and faculty are learning, while deeply engaged in ministry. In that sense, we hope this journal demonstrates orthodoxy, orthopraxy, and orthopathos.

My father, who passed away earlier this year, had the opportunity to learn while deeply engaged in ministry, as the supply pastor at Pineland's Presbyterian Church. I heard him repeatedly tell young men training for ministry that, while they needed to complete seminary in a timely fashion, the more deeply they could be involved in working and in serving in the local church, the more significant the learning from the classroom would be to them. I hope the *BTJ* will be a place where our students and faculty can explore significant theological ideas while also being grounded in the practicality of ministry. If they can do so—and do so well—then I deeply believe that this journal will be a blessing to others both inside and outside the seminary.

I would like to take a brief moment to give thanks to Dr. Pat Sanders, the Director of the Research and Writing Center, for championing and leading this project. She is an extraordinary professor, a fine friend, and a blessing to all who know and can learn from her. Thanks also to her team: Ryan Brady, MDiv student, and Dr. Jay Haley, BTS Chief of Staff and Systematic Theology professor. Thanks also to all the students and faculty readers who helped work through submissions and editing. To all of you—this represents a job well done. I'm thankful for your work! Blessings to you, dear reader. Our prayer is that in studying and reading we might be drawn closer to our Savior Jesus Christ and walk in the power of the Spirit in His footsteps.

Godspeed,
Ike Reeder, President
Birmingham Theological Seminary