

**Settling Accounts with Southern Baptist Distinctives:  
James Howell Street's *The Gauntlet***

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**Abstract**

James Howell Street has been lauded for crafting in fiction one of the most insightful portrayals of the twentieth-century Protestant ministry. His pastorates in the Southern Baptist Convention were quite brief, but they bequeathed to him a cornucopia of experiences from which he created two commendable novels, *The Gauntlet* (1945) and *The High Calling* (1951). In the first of these works Street focused his attention primarily on conflicts between a neophyte pastor from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary who is called to a small church in Missouri in the 1920s, his quest for a deeper faith at a time of theological turmoil, and the vulnerable situation in which his wife winds herself when subjected to domineering older members of the congregation. *The Gauntlet* can be read as a critical commentary on aspects of Baptist polity which place pastors at the mercy of their flocks.