

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THIS ISSUE OF the *Mid-America Journal of Theology* is a continuation of last year's Theme Issue on "The Sacraments" (Vol. 11, 2000).

In this theme issue, "The Sacraments: Part II," there are, as in its predecessor, articles on both baptism and the Lord's Supper. However, whereas the former issue contained thematic book reviews devoted primarily to the subject of baptism, the thematic book reviews in this volume focus primarily on the Lord's Supper.

Two of the articles in this issue examine issues surrounding the doctrine of baptism. Mark Vander Hart explores the meaning of 1 Corinthians 10:1-13, specifically the meaning of being "baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea." He sets this passage in its redemptive-historical context and argues that the Exodus is a genuine sacramental event. He also explores the theological implications of this passage for the doctrine of baptism.

The undersigned considers the position of some contemporary Baptist authors on original sin, infant salvation, and the baptism of infants. In rejecting the permissibility of infant baptism, many Baptist writers also reject the classical Augustinian or Reformed federalist doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin and simultaneously offer a vigorous argument for infant salvation. This position is critiqued and its inconsistencies are exposed.

Three articles explore features of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Cornelis Venema continues his exposition of the Reformed Confessions on preaching and the sacraments. With this article he analyzes at length the major confessional

documents of the Reformed churches on the nature and theology of the Lord's Supper, including a closing section in which various theological and practical matters surrounding the Lord's Supper are considered.

C. Trimp presents a biblical analysis of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. This material, translated by Nelson Kloosterman, responds to various contemporary discussions of the Lord's Supper, including recent ecumenical writings and decisions pertaining to communion. Trimp challenges the lines of exegesis that turn the elements of the Lord's Supper into abstract substances. Christ is the host who gives us the elements and we must focus upon the divine action, depicting God's love, in the sacraments.

Riemer Faber's article is a historical study of the practice of the early Dutch Reformed churches regarding admission to the Lord's Supper. He offers a trajectory of interpretation pertaining to this matter based on a variety of original source materials, including the decisions of early Reformed synods and the practice of particular Reformed communities and churches.

Finally there is one article devoted to the role of the sacraments as means of grace. Alan Strange offers a polemical essay aimed at rebutting both the sacerdotalism of Roman Catholicism and certain modern aberrations among some Reformed groups regarding how divine grace is conveyed to lost sinners. In the face of human inability, Strange argues vigorously that the Holy Spirit's work, through the appointed means of the Word *and* the sacraments, is and remains indispensable.

—J. Mark Beach