

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THIS ISSUE OF the *Mid-America Journal of Theology* is a commemorative issue celebrating the four hundredth anniversary of the birth of Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669) and the three hundredth anniversary of the birth of Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758). The articles of this issue are devoted to exploring features of their theology and ecclesiastical labors.

Two of the articles examine facets of Johannes Cocceius's thought. Unlike Jonathan Edwards, Cocceius is not a familiar name in the North American ecclesiastical context. However, in the land in which he labored most of his life—the Netherlands—his name is not at all unfamiliar. He ranks as one of the most important Reformed theologians of the seventeenth century. Among the Reformed writers of that era, Cocceius, along with Gisbertus Voetius (1589-1676), must be counted among the most erudite and influential theologians of the continent, especially in the Netherlands.

The first article by Brian J. Lee explores the semi-technical Latin terminology that Cocceius employed in order to bring clarity and precision to his biblical exposition of the doctrine of the covenants. Specifically Lee examines the terms *Foedus*, *Pactum*, and *Testamentum*, carefully following Cocceius's own treatment and definitions of these terms. Lee shows that in using these terms Cocceius was able to set forth and safeguard what he perceived to be the biblical relationship between God and humanity, with Christ's merit alone securing the redemption of sinners. Consequently, the sinner's merit is excluded in redemption inasmuch as God's covenantal dealings with fallen sinners, that is, the covenant relationship itself, is best characterized as a testamentary type of relation whereby the promised blessings of the covenant are granted to sinners in a unilateral and irrevocable manner. The sinner's response to God's gracious initiative in the

way of faith and obedience is subordinated to God's testament, for salvation and the sinner's assurance of salvation are rooted in the blood of the testament, that is, in Christ's work alone.

The article by Willem J. van Asselt explores a particular theological dispute that reigned between Cocceians and Voetians in the Netherlands during the seventeenth century, namely, their dispute about the nature of Christ's suretyship in salvation history. The pivotal question in this debate was how the nature of Christ's mediating work during the Old Testament dispensation was to be construed. The debate largely hinged on Cocceius's distinction between the forgiveness of sins (*pavresi~*) under the Old Testament and forgiveness (*a[lesi~*) under the New Testament. Did God offer salvation in the Old Testament dispensation in a way distinct from the way of salvation in the New Testament dispensation? The distinction that Cocceius and his followers employed between *pavresi~* (passing by, overlooking) and *a[lesi~* (cancellation) was directly linked to the question whether Christ's suretyship was best understood as *expromissio* or as *fideiussio*. Cocceius and his school argued that Christ was a surety after the manner of a *fideiussor*, whereas Voetius and his followers maintained that Christ was a surety in the way of an *expromissor*. Van Asselt takes us through some of the exegetical and theological features of this dispute and shows how larger theological issues were at stake as well.

Jonathan Edwards labored a century after Cocceius and in an entirely different intellectual and cultural climate than the one that confronted the Leyden professor. Often regarded as one of America's premier theologians, Edwards has been at the center of a great deal of scholarly attention over the past twenty-five years. Not only is the definitive Yale edition of his works nearing completion, but the spate of articles surrounding his life and thought continues to increase. Two articles in this issue of the journal are devoted to examining features of his theological work, especially in connection with his labors as a preacher and pastor. Nelson D. Kloosterman investigates Edwards' work *A History of the Work of Redemption*, specifically Edwards' understanding of post-canonical salvation history and his use of typology as an instrument of biblical interpretation and application. In this connection, Kloosterman offers an evaluation of Edwards' contribution for current discussions surrounding exegesis, theology, and homiletics and the relationship between *historia salutis* and *ordo salutis*.

Alan D. Strange presents an historical analysis of Edwards' idea of visible sainthood and how this led to a theological revision of his position regarding who may be reckoned as proper recipients of the Lord's Supper. Strange demonstrates that Edwards carved out a middle position between Solomon Stoddard's less stringent communion requirements and the "narrative of grace" practice of the New England Way. Strange's article also shows how Edwards' rejection of Stoddard's position, along with his attempt to implement his own communion practices among his Northampton parishioners, led to his dismissal in 1750.

We are pleased to honor the labors of both Cocceius and Edwards, thinkers who represent the rich and varied scope of the Reformed theological tradition. Indeed, each of these theologians made major and distinctive contributions to the heritage that is Reformed theology.

Finally the editorial committee offers its apologies to Peter J. Wallace for failing to detect a computer formatting glitch that created incorrect sub-headings at the end of his essay on Francis Turretin's doctrine of the covenant (published in volume 13, 2002). Under section III of his article the sub-heading on page 176 should read, as corrected, "*3. Cocceianism,*" followed (on pages 176 and 177) by sub-set headings: "a. The Old Testament and the forgiveness of sin" and "b. The third use of the Law." Readers are asked to note these errata. The committee regrets the error.

—J. Mark Beach