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the

WRS Journal

Western Reformed Seminary, Tacoma, Washington

Volume 14, Issue 1

February 2007

This issue: *Baptism: Sign of the Covenant of Grace*



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EDITOR'S NOTES: FROM JOHN A. BATTLE

Reformed Christians have a unique position on baptism. On the one hand, the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Lutheran, and Anglican churches all believe that water baptism actually regenerates the person baptized and brings forgiveness of sins—the position of baptismal regeneration. This is a strong motivation for infant baptism. On the other hand, baptistic churches believe that baptism is an ordinance to be given only to those who have already given testimony of their faith, ruling out infant baptism. We believe that infants are to be baptized in obedience to God's command, to visibly identify them as belonging to the Lord and members of his church. Baptism does not save them automatically—that is the work of the sovereign Holy Spirit, working how and when he pleases. Yet we believe our children are children of the Lord, according to his promise to Abraham, and are therefore entitled to the sacrament and to their place in the visible church, the people of God's covenant.

Chris Lensch starts off showing the significance of baptism as a covenant sign, similar to the covenants in Bible times, with their terms and conditions. I relate the significance of the covenant of grace to the mode of baptism, showing that the Bible links the new covenant to the modes of sprinkling and pouring. Dennis Jowers shows how the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, now promoted by the Federal Vision movement, is inconsistent with Reformed theology. WRS graduate Tim Prussic explains John Calvin's position on infant baptism, which was distinct from the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Anabaptist views. On the practical side, Len Pine spells out the program Reformed parents need to follow in rearing their children so as to make their baptisms meaningful. We conclude with reviews by WRS faculty members of several important and helpful books regarding baptism. May God bless us as we baptize and rear our covenant children!

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