

Gerhard Forde, "Something to Believe: A Theological Perspective on Infant Baptism," *Interpretation* 47 (1993) 229-41. Reprinted in *The Preached God. Proclamation in Word and Sacrament*. Ed. Mark C. Mattes and Steven D. Paulson. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007, pp. 131-45; here 145.

*Something to Believe: A Theological Perspective on Infant Baptism*

Grace is not a hidden agenda. The grace of baptism calls us to turn from the endless preoccupation with self and the pessimism that has virtually destroyed the sacrament to the glorious action of the triune God "out there" in his world. The grace is in the very externality of it. It is to be announced and spread abroad, not withheld. None of the abuses attributed to a "too liberal" practice of infant baptism will be corrected by withdrawing it. That is like withholding food from the starving until they have a proper concept of nourishment. We do not need to protect the Lord from the Lord's own generosity! In the current "post-Constantinian" age, withholding baptism does not end but only fosters a more legalistic preoccupation with the self. To be sure, there is wholesale confusion and misunderstanding about the sacraments, just as there is about Christian theology in general. But we do not plan to stop preaching just because it is poorly done or misunderstood. The only real weapon left to the church is the proper teaching and preaching of baptism as the gracious and saving action of the triune God. And that, certainly, is about as it should be.