

Nourishment from the Word: Select Studies in Reformed Doctrine, is a welcomed collection of shorter writings by the noted Reformed theologian, Dr. Kenneth L. Gentry. Dr. Gentry puts forth concise theological arguments and well-articulated distinctions of Reformed theological thought on a variety of subjects. Every student of the Holy Scriptures will greatly benefit from reading this book.

—Dr. Kenneth Gary Talbot
President

Whitefield College and Theological Seminary, Lakeland, Florida

I have found the material in this volume to be of tremendous help to my own theological study. Whenever I forget about the Scriptural details of these issues, I find myself pulling these chapters back out, because Dr. Gentry is so organized, concise, and to the point about what really matters.

—Brian Godawa
Author, Hollywood Worldviews:

Watching Films with Wisdom and Discernment, Los Angeles, California

From the dawning of a six-day creation to the world's ending, Dr. Gentry's brilliant insights are always well worth pondering. This small collection of writings contains some of his most profound, God-honoring thinking. Masterful understanding of scripture combined with sound logic causes one to deeply ponder his conclusions. Thorough and incisive in his research and argumentation, Dr. Gentry epitomizes the Spirit-inspired man who has dedicated himself to loving the LORD with his entire mind.

—John David McPeak

Lieutenant Colonel, Ret. U.S. Army

M.S., Strategic Intelligence, Joint Military Intelligence College,
Bolling Air Force Base, Washington, DC

It is impossible to love God with our minds if they are empty. This volume, with clarity, relevance, and wit, equips Christians to develop minds so that they cease being empty-headed children, and instead can in their “thinking be mature” (1 Cor. 14:20). Even where I disagree with my learned friend, the cogency of his analysis remains compelling.

—Jeffery J. Ventrella, J.D.

Senior Vice-President,

Strategic Training, Alliance Defense Fund, Mesa, Arizona

Dr. Gentry has constructed a wonderful resource on key ecclesiastical and doctrinal issues. The format is easy to read, the organization is clear and succinct, and the argumentation compelling. This book will be a helpful tool to pastors and laypersons alike.

—Rev. Dan Dodds

Minister of Counseling and Care

Woodruff Road Presbyterian Church (PCA), Greenville, South Carolina



About the Author

KENNETH L. GENTRY, JR., B.A., M.Div., Th.M., Th.D., is a Reformed theologian and a member of the Presbyterian Church in America. He was born May 3, 1950, in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He and his wife Melissa were married in July of 1971, and have three grown children, all who have confessed Jesus Christ as Lord and God.

Ken received his B.A. in Biblical Studies from Tennessee Temple University (1973, cum laude). After graduating, he enrolled at Grace Theological Seminary in Winona Lake, Indiana. After two years at Grace Seminary (1973-1975), he left dispensationalism, having become convinced of a covenant and Reformed theology. He transferred to Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi (1975-1977). Upon completing studies at Reformed Theological Seminary, he was awarded the M.Div. in 1977. After several years of pastoral ministry, he earned a Th.M. (1986) and a Th.D. (1987, magna cum laude) from Whitefield Theological Seminary, both in the field of New Testament.

While at Reformed Theological Seminary, he studied under Greg L. Bahnsen, a leading presuppositional apologist. Though Gentry initially resisted the distinctive ethical and eschatological views of Bahnsen, he was eventually persuaded of both theonomic ethics and postmillennial

eschatology and became a staunch co-defender of them with Bahnsen. Over the years, he developed a close friendship with Bahnsen, often lecturing with him in conferences and co-writing a book with him (*House Divided: The Break-up of Dispensational Theology*). He eventually joined the staff of Bahnsen's Southern California Center for Christian Studies, and contributed to the *festschrift* in honor of Bahnsen, titled: *The Standard Bearer*.

Ken has authored or co-authored some twenty-plus books and is perhaps best known for his book *Before Jerusalem Fell*, which argues that the Book of Revelation was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. He holds that many of the dramatic events in Revelation correspond to the persecution of Christians under the Roman imperium as well as to the Jewish War against Rome which resulted in the destruction of the Jewish temple.

Gentry is the Executive Director of GoodBirth Ministries, a non-profit religious educational ministry, "committed to sponsoring, subsidizing, and advancing serious Christian scholarship and education." He is also the Director of NiceneCouncil.com, a Christian apologetics Web site.

From the Publisher

This book is created for all serious Christians desiring to dig deeper into the Bible and find the truth, as the Truth will set us free. We need to be consuming the meat and not just the milk of theology. Wisdom is the principle thing, so says the the Word of God; it comes from the fear of the Lord, from knowledge (Epistemology), understanding of reality (Ontology), and God's Law (Theonomy), developing our faith by the hearing and reading of God's revelation. Together we dig for God's nuggets of gold.

Dr. Kenneth Gentry, an astute, brilliant Bible Scholar and devoted man of God, helps the reader find those golden nuggets—dissecting, comparing Scripture with Scripture, deciphering the context and time of events—all in a systematic theological manner empowered by the Holy Spirit. His background in the Reformed tradition of the faith (see “About the Author”), his intentional deep study of Holy Writ, and his precise and gentle, loving style of communicating, makes this book a must for students who want to follow Jesus lovingly, obediently, and wisely.

Here is a tiny sampling of the tasty morsels you will discover in this book from Dr. Gentry's informed pen:

“A growing understanding of the Bible comes only through reading it, systematizing it, studying it, hearing it expounded, and applying it.” (Chapter One, page 8)

“The fact that the truth of Scripture is of no ‘private interpretation’ is a foundational principle of creedal theology. No interpreter of Scripture works alone; we all must build on the past labors of godly predecessors.” (Chapter One, page 10)

“Reformed Christians are a ‘people of The Book.’ We firmly believe that both the Old and New Testaments are God-breathed and profitable for God’s people. Though we may easily discern obvious progress and development in Scripture, the Bible is, nevertheless, one Book.” (Chapter Two, page 16)

“Actually the defense of Christianity is simple: we argue the impossibility of the contrary. Those who assault the Christian system must actually assume the Christian system to do so. In fact, atheism assumes theism.” (Chapter Five, page 90)

“But I believe [this] sufficiently demonstrates the validity of the Westminster Confession, which declares: ‘It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of His eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days; and all very good.’” (Chapter Six, page 99)

“Thus, the theme of Revelation is the execution of God’s divorce decree against Israel, her subsequent capital punishment and cremation, followed by His turning to take a new bride, the Church.” (Chapter Eight, page 153)

My personal gratitude to Dr. Ken Gentry for allowing us to republish his work in one volume dispensing sound exegetical expository of Holy Scripture, helping all of us to learn, grow, and enjoy this “Nourishment from the Word” in these “Select Studies in Reformed Doctrine” all to the glory of God. As Dr. Gentry affirms in his initial chapter: “It is fundamentally necessary to hold as one’s credo: ‘I believe Jesus is Lord.’”



—Gerald Christian Nordskog
Publisher

Contents

About the Author IX

From the Publisher XI



PREFACE XV

CHURCH ISSUES

1 Creeds and Confessions 3
A Defense of the Usefulness of Creeds

2 Infant Baptism 15
The Biblical Rationale for Baptizing Infants

3 Baptismal Mode 29
The Biblical Rationale for Sprinkling

4 Tongues-Speaking 55
The Meaning, Purpose, and Cessation of Tongues

DOCTRINAL ISSUES

5 Defending the Faith 81
An Introduction to Biblical Apologetics

6 Six Day Creation 91
A Defense of the Traditional Exegesis

7 God's Law 101
Theonomy and the Westminster Confession

8 Revelation of Jesus Christ 133
An Overview of the Book of Revelation



INDEXES

Subject Index 157

Scripture Index 161



PREFACE

We live in an age of doctrinal confusion and spiritual anemia. The Christian airwaves are dominated by charismatics, Christian bookstores are purveyors of froth and trinkets, and Christian churches are more interested in numbers than in truth. This doctrinal declension is even affecting Reformed churches, once known for doctrinal fidelity. Gary North commented that the reason Presbyterian churches no longer preach doctrine is because the Baptist church across the street has a bigger gymnasium. Sadly, God's people are "destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos. 4:6).

This book presents in collected form eight studies published separately as the Biblical Issues Series. In these studies, I touch on eight themes that are significant for the Reformed Christian's understanding of his doctrinal heritage which is strongly rooted in Biblical truth. I have organized these in two sections: the first dealing with "Church Issues" and the second on "Doctrinal Issues."

The first section on Church Issues relates to important matters framing some distinctives of the Reformed church itself. Chapter One studies the issue of "Creeds and Confessions." Reformed Christianity recognizes the organic nature of the church, which leads to our organic understanding of and commitment to the truth. That is, we recognize that we are

not a law unto ourselves, we are not islands in the stream. Rather we are a part of the flowing stream of historic Christianity itself. Hence, we give credence to creeds, you might say. Reformed Christians need to understand the Biblical warrant for and the theological value of creeds and confessions.

Chapter Two explains and defends a distinctively Reformed understanding of “Infant Baptism.” Our children are the seed of the covenant and members of the church of Jesus Christ. They are not outsiders who are visiting the church until some time when they reach an “age of accountability.” Reformed Christians must recognize this truth as vitally important, not only for understanding the Biblical nature of church membership, but the covenantal significance of children in the Christian life.

Chapter Three focuses on “Baptismal Mode.” Since our doctrine is covenantal, our method of baptism is rooted in Old Testament imagery, which repeatedly emphasizes ceremonial sprinklings and pourings. Whereas many an evangelical church claims to be a “New Testament church,” a Reformed church should claim to be a “whole Bible church.” Furthermore, in that water baptism pictures Spirit baptism, I show that the Bible presents both baptisms as coming down from above and by means of pouring. Reformed Christians need to understand the Biblical warrant for why we baptize as we do.

Chapter Four reckons with the matter of “Tongues-Speaking,” which is a widely popular, broadcast-dominating phenomenon afflicting many churches today. This chapter looks into the various Biblical passages touching on tongues-speaking. In it I show that the very form of modern tongues-speaking [*glossalia*] differs from Biblical tongues. The reason for this confusion is largely related to the fact that the miraculous nature of Biblical tongues confines them to the apostolic church and the first century. Reformed Christians need to understand that their lack of tongues-speaking is not an indicator of a lack of spirituality and that the popularity of tongues today is another sign of confusion in the church.

The second section of this book contains four studies on “Doctrinal Issues” that are significant for the modern Reformed church’s self-understanding. Chapter Five considers the proper method of “Defending the Faith.” The Reformed faith does not argue that Christianity is the

best option among competing worldviews. Rather it insists that it is the only rational option because of the two-leveled nature of reality: the Creator and the creature. It does not argue that Christianity is possibly or even probably true, but that it is absolutely and certainly true. Reformed Christians need to defend the Biblical faith in a way that flows from the very nature of that faith itself.

Chapter Six presents the argument for “Six Day Creation.” Six-day creation is a major contemporary controversy pitting the Christian worldview against secularism. Not only so but it even differs from some popular compromises promoted within Reformed circles themselves. The very integrity of the Bible and the foundation of the Christian worldview are at stake in this debate. Reformed Christians must understand the clear and compelling Biblical argument for the method of creation which has been revealed to us by the Creator Himself.

Chapter Seven considers the proper Reformed understanding of the role of God’s Law in the new covenant era. This chapter demonstrates that the primary confession of Presbyterianism, the Westminster Confession of Faith, affirms the continuing validity of God’s Law today. Given our cultural relativism and its antipathy to absolute standards for ethics, this is an important matter for promoting the Christian worldview. Reformed Christians must understand their historic commitment to God’s Law as the absolute, God-revealed standard for ethics.

Chapter Eight highlights the most debated book in Scripture, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ.” Unfortunately, no Reformed consensus exists on the book of Revelation (it has even been lamented that wherever you find five commentaries on Revelation you will discover six views of Revelation). Yet the modern evangelical mind is saturated with what the Reformed community does almost universally denounce: premillennialism. In this chapter, I show that Revelation actually deals with the beginning of Christian history, not its end. The contemporary church has literally turned the Revelation of Jesus Christ upside down. Reformed Christians must apprehend the true meaning of Revelation in order to help fellow evangelicals see the error of their premillennial analysis.

Each of these chapters contains material quite important for bracing against the tides of confusion lapping at Christian foundations. I hope

that this book will serve not only for your own private study, but for group Bible studies in your particular church or local community. Paul writes to Timothy in a way that we would do well to emulate: “In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following” (1 Tim. 4:6).

These studies were originally published in separate booklets comprising the *Biblical Issues Series*. I would like to thank Jerry Nordskog and Nordskog Publishing, Inc. for combining these studies in one volume. As noted above, Paul urges us to be “constantly nourished on the words of the faith.” Truly Nordskog’s commitment to publishing “meaty, tasty, and easily digestible books” on Christian theology maintains that Pauline concern for nourishment. Nordskog is a welcome endeavor in a publishing market largely confused and confusing.

—Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., TH.M., TH.D.

Executive Director, GoodBirth Ministries
www.GoodBirthMinistries.com

Director, NiceneCouncil.Com
www.NiceneCouncil.com