

## **Bahnsen Responds To Gerstner**

*By Dr. Greg Bahnsen*

In Dr. Gerstner's response to my review of his book (Dec. 4) he asserts that the review offers "mere allegations" as to the book's apologetical position. This plea is weak, disregarding the review's many substantiating page references.

Gerstner asserts the book "already answers" the review's objections. This is dubious, for were it true, those objections would not have been raised in the first place. For instance, contrary to his claim, there just is no "carefully worked out argument" against Hume in the book. (Let Gerstner rehearse its premises for us.) The fact is, no philosophy department would give passing marks to his "tautological" defense of the law of causality (p. 83). Hume has just been misunderstood.

So has Van Til, Gerstner asserts the review was "without any criticism" of his book's treatment of presuppositionalism. This was incredible, missing the most devastating criticism imaginable: that the authors thoroughly misrepresent Van Til's position.

Gerstner asserts that the review "submits no proof" of such misrepresentation, somehow evading its direct quotations from Van Til. Gerstner's suggestion that, regardless of how Van Til regards his own position, Gerstner understands better the true character of Van Til's views is high-minded. Since "charity rejoices in the truth," Gerstner's persistent misconstrual of presuppositionalism is just uncharitable.

For instance, at the end of his response, Gerstner says that Van Til's presuppositionalism would have the Holy Spirit inwardly confirm what is "rationally absurd." This deserves a Guinness record for misrepresentation, Van Til himself criticizes fideists because they "believe in their hearts what they have virtually allowed to be intellectually indefensible" (*Christian-Theistic Evidences*, p. 37). According to presuppositionalism, the Holy Spirit opens eyes "in the presence of inescapably clear

evidence." We aim to show that "it is wholly irrational to hold any other position than that of Christianity" (*Jerusalem And Athens*, p. 21).

Gerstner hardly does better in trying to defend his book against its philosophical defects. Space allows but one example.

Reacting to the review's critique, Gerstner now wants to rewrite his cosmological argument, replacing the simple term "something" with the more loaded expression "some *eternal* thing." (These are hardly equivalent in ordinary English or technical logic!). However, his argument remains fallacious. If something so happens to exist eternally, it *does not follow* that it "necessarily" exists. The philosophical issues are just not comprehended.

Moreover, Gerstner's cosmological argument still turns upon the expression "the power of being" - which, without definition or explication reduces the "proof" to profound sounding gibberish. Can Gerstner explain himself?

Gerstner is touchy about the review's passing (accurate) observation that the authors lack earned degrees in philosophy. Granted, without such degrees they could still demonstrate academic competence by means of their published work. But this book is just not an example.

In summary, Gerstner's response to my review has only served to reinforce the original evaluation. The review observed that his book's philosophical case for theism is not cogent, and his portrayal of Van Til is inaccurate. The same things have evidenced themselves in Gerstner's response to the review.

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