

# Amillennialism — John Gerstner (Response)

1) My first issue with Gerstner's book is the overall tone. He seems bitter, and hostile in his assessments, and makes inflammatory remarks repeatedly throughout the book.

"Gerstner's attitude toward dispensationalism, as displayed in the book, is antagonistic, confrontational, denunciatory, and polemic. Throughout the book the tone almost without relief is angry, bitter, caustic, derogatory, inflammatory, judgmental, and at times even sarcastic (see p. 223). Gerstner resorts to name-calling with its concomitant guilt by association."

— John A. Witmer, Part 1: A Review of Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth, Journal: *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Volume: BSAC 149:594 (Apr 1992).

"Dr. Gerstner frequently resorts, out of character with a carefully reasoned scholastic exchange, to pejorative language and sarcasm. One wonders why one needs inflammatory rhetoric 'e.g., cult (p. 150), pantheism (pp. 136, 143), and 'departed from Christianity' (p. 150)' to disprove such a supposedly lame theological opponent as 'dispensationalism.'"

— Richard L. Mayhue, Who is Wrong? A Review of John Gerstner's Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth, (TMSJ 3/1 (Spring 1992), 87.

"The fifth and final major problem with Gerstner's study is the spirit in which it is written. At times the language and tone of the book is sarcastic, arrogant, and demeaning. Earnest theological debate is fine, but not rhetoric which slurs fellow imagers of God in God's new creation. It is especially disturbing that respected theologians J. I. Packer and R. C. Sproul have endorsed this diatribe."

— David L. Turner, Dubious Evangelicalism? A Response to John Gerstner's Critique of Dispensationalism, Grace Theological Journal 12.2 (1992) 276.

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2) The second glaring issue I take with the book is the repeated misrepresentations of Dispensationalism.

Here are some of the fallacious charges:

- a) Dispensationalism teaches antinomianism.
- b) Dispensationalism teaches Arminianism.
- c) Dispensationalism teaches anti-lordship.
- d) Dispensationalism is another Gospel.

"The most prominent is antinomianism, a charge leveled in the titles of two chapters (11 and 12) and made frequently throughout the book, beginning on page 1 and ending on page 272. He also identifies dispensationalism as Arminianism (p. 107 and elsewhere), Gnosticism (p. 208), pantheism (pp. 136, 143), Pelagianism (p. 243 and elsewhere), and perfectionism (p. 246 and elsewhere). As a capstone Gerstner identifies dispensationalism as "heresy" (pp. 1, 231 and elsewhere) and a "cult" (p. 150)."

— John A. Witmer, Part 1: A Review of Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth, Journal: *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Volume: BSAC 149:594 (Apr 1992).

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3) Gerstner fails to interact with leading proponents of Dispensationalism (Walvoord, McClain, MacArthur, Saucy, Bock, Blaising, Showers, Feinberg etc.), and therefore makes sweeping statements ad nauseum:

"Dr. Gerstner's volume does not generally reflect the writings of dispensationalists since 1980, as illustrated above. Therefore, it could not possibly represent or interact with current dispensational thinking as it purports to do (p. 72)."

— Richard L. Mayhue, Who is Wrong? A Review of John Gerstner's Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth, (TMSJ 3/1 (Spring 1992), 86.

"Unfortunately, Dr. Gerstner has not accurately identified the current makeup or movement of dispensationalism. Thus, the almost unrecognizable image he paints of current dispensationalism results from several errors of fact and/or

omission. First, he looks at the Darby/Scofield era and then the Chafer/Walvoord/Ryrie era as the bases for his conclusions, rather than being current with the new era of dispensational thought in the 80s'90s whose leading spokesmen might well include Robert L. Saucy and John F. MacArthur, Jr. The former deals more with eschatology and the latter soteriology/ecclesiology. The author limits his research primarily to earlier Dallas Theological Seminary expressions of dispensationalism that do not comprehensively reflect the whole of dispensational thought, past or present."

— Richard L. Mayhue, Who is Wrong? A Review of John Gerstner's Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth, (TMSJ 3/1 (Spring 1992), 90-91.

"First, Gerstner's approach may be faulted on logical grounds. His book is filled with hasty generalizations which comprehensively sweep aside all dispensationalists. But these generalizations are built on critiques of individuals who do not represent contemporary dispensationalism. At times these individuals are nonrepresentative because their views are outdated. Historical development has occurred. At other times Gerstner cites unpublished sources or rather obscure individuals whose views may tend to be idiosyncratic. The result is inadequate induction which does not support the global deductions about all dispensationalists."

— David L. Turner, Dubious Evangelicalism? A Response to John Gerstner's Critique of Dispensationalism, Grace Theological Journal 12.2 (1992) 273-274.

"Fourth, it appears that in crucial areas Gerstner is much more familiar with classic dispensational sources than with contemporary dispensational sources. Substantive interaction occurs mainly with Darby, Scofield, Chafer, and Ryrie. This tendency counters Gerstner's statements that he has examined current dispensational sources."

— David L. Turner, Dubious Evangelicalism? A Response to John Gerstner's Critique of Dispensationalism, Grace Theological Journal 12.2 (1992) 274.

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4) The fourth issue is the claim that Dispensationalism teaches multiple ways of salvation. Which is patently false.

"Are there two ways by which one may be saved? In reply to this question it may be stated that salvation of whatever specific character is always the work of God in behalf of man and never a work of man in behalf of God. This is to assert that God never saved any one person or group of persons on any other ground than that righteous freedom to do so which the Cross of Christ secured. There is, therefore, but one way to be saved and that is by the power of God made possible through the sacrifice of Christ."

— Lewis S. Chafer, Editorial, *Bibliotheca Sacra* Vol. 102, No. 405 (1945), 1.

"It is important to note that dispensationalists have never advocated the position that there are two ways of salvation: Mosaic law for Old Testament people of God and faith for the New Testament people. Admittedly, isolated statements have been made that might lead one to conclude that dispensationalists hold to two ways of salvation, but these statements have generally been clarified."

— Wayne G. Strickland, *The Inauguration of the Law of Christ with the Gospel of Christ: A Dispensational View in Five Views on Law and Gospel*, (Zondervan Publishing House; GrandRapids, Michigan, 1996), 235.

"In comparing these contemporary statements of dispensationalism with covenant theology, we conclude that there is no longer any substantive difference between the two on the subject of the law and the Gospel."

— Daniel Fuller, *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum?* (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1980), 45.

"...there are not two ways of salvation. All salvation of God stems from the Savior, the Son of God, and His work on the cross. ... The two great essentials of salvation remain the same from the salvation of Adam to the last soul which God takes to Himself in the future. Faith is the condition and the death of Christ is the basis."

— John Walvoord, *Series in Christology-Part 4: The Preincarnate Son of God*" *Bibliotheca Sacra* Vol. 104, No. 416, (1947): 422.

"Let it be stated categorically that Dispensationalism has not and does not believe that the Law of Moses was a means of salvation. This concept is rejected because it would make salvation by means of works. Salvation was and always is by grace through faith. While the content of faith has changed from age to age, depending on progressive revelation, the means of salvation never changes. The law was not given to serve as a means of salvation (Rom. 3:20, 28; Gal. 2:16; 3:11, 21)."

— Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link In Systematic Theology* (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries Press, 1989), 590-591.

"In light of this significant revision in the New Scofield Reference Bible and the arguments of such dispensationalists as Ryrie and [John] Feinberg, the old charge should be dropped. One must proceed from the acknowledgment that dispensationalism recognizes a single way of salvation throughout the scripture. Salvation is now and has always been by grace alone — *Sola Gratia!* This agreement is a cause for joy; its acknowledgment should not be made grudgingly."

— Fred Klooster, *The Biblical Method of Salvation: A Case for Continuity*, in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments* (Westchester: Crossway Books), 133.

"We gratefully acknowledge their [dispensationalist's] insistence that in every age salvation is only through grace, on the basis of the merits of Christ."

— Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 194.