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## A REVIEW OF *THE END OF CHRISTIANITY* BY WILLIAM A DEMBSKI

By Dan W. Reynolds, PhD

**T**he *End of Christianity* by William Dembski attempts to reconcile natural evil with a good God. The problem for Dembski, who believes modern science has proven that the earth and universe are billions of years old, is to explain how natural evil in the form of physical death and suffering could have existed before the Fall of Man while leaving God's good character intact. Dembski creates an elaborate theology to address this problem.

Dembski is one of the founders of the Intelligent Design movement and is a senior fellow at the Discovery Institute in Seattle.<sup>1,2</sup> As such he has authored many books and articles, organized conferences on design, participated in debates, and done original research. He is the inventor of the Explanatory Filter, an algorithm which provides a rigorous method for detecting intelligent design in biology. Dembski has doctorates in philosophy and mathematics, masters degrees in theology and statistics, and a bachelors degree in psychology. He is a committed Christian as is evident in many of his writings. Dembski is currently Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Center for Cultural Engagement at Southwest Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS) in Fort Worth, Texas. There he teaches classes in Christian apologetics. Dembski has suffered much in his career because of his emphasis on design in nature.<sup>3</sup> I had the distinct privilege of meeting him at an apologetics conference at SWBTS in April of this year. There he gave a talk on the Logos of Creation. He had friendly and even loving interactions with the likes of John and Henry Morris, both committed

to the young earth view. Dembski seemed to be a tender and humble man.

The position of TASC on the age of the earth follows from a straight forward reading of the Scriptures. Taken in a straight forward manner, the Scriptures indicate the creation is no older than ten thousand years.

Dembski acknowledges that young earth

creationism (YEC) make s "neat" fit with Scripture. He also affirms that death and suffering are natural evils that entered into the world as a result of the Fall of Man. Dembski, however, apparently considers science an epistemological equal to Scripture where the natural

world is concerned. He is convinced science has demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that the earth and universe are billions of years old.

Dembski says YEC is strong on theology but weak on science. He says the RATE project left too many questions unanswered to be yet convincing. However, he only cites Don DeYoung's summary of the work and not the two technical volumes the RATE team published<sup>4</sup> suggesting his research of RATE may have been limited. Dembski seems to

have a theological problem with accelerated nuclear decay in that it would violate the "continuity of nature". By this he means that God has setup the world to operate by

<sup>1</sup> Dembski's resume is available at:  
<[http://www.designinference.com/documents/PDF\\_Current\\_CV\\_Dembski.pdf](http://www.designinference.com/documents/PDF_Current_CV_Dembski.pdf)> Accessed 2010 May 18

<sup>2</sup> <<http://www.discovery.org/>> Accessed 2010 May 23

<sup>3</sup> Reynolds D (2008 June) Freedom of speech and religion? Not in academia <<http://www.tasc-creationscience.org/sites/default/files/newsletters/2008/jun08.pdf>> Accessed 2010 May 18

<sup>4</sup> The two technical volumes and other resources are available for free online in pdf format. Go to:  
<<http://www.icr.org/rate/>> Accessed 2010 May 18



William Dembski

**Bible scholars have long held that Old Testament saints were saved by the blood of Christ because the atonement worked retroactively in history.... Dembski applies this same thinking to the Fall.**

natural law in an unbroken continuous fashion. Invoking supernaturally induced accelerated nuclear decay violates this continuity and for Dembski seems inconsistent with God's character. Consider the following statements:

Natural laws give God plenty of room to maneuver—or perhaps we should say that God designed natural laws to accommodate divine action. To act in the world, God does not need to violate natural laws; it's enough for Him simply to work with and around them.

The constancy of nature reflects the covenant faithfulness of God—that just as God has a consistent character that we count on, so God has given the world a consistent character that we can count on (p. 58).

However, consider the feeding of the five thousand with just five loaves and two fishes (Matt 14:16-21). The initial fish and bread were somehow multiplied to feed the crowd with food leftover. Jesus could have simply created the additional bread and fish *ex nihilo* (in violation of the First Law of Thermodynamics), transmuted the air into the elements and molecules comprising fish and bread instantly at room temperature (nuclear fusion in stars is the only known natural process that can convert one element into another), or transported additional bread and fish from remote locations (contrary to gravity). Regardless of how Jesus did it, the process was not natural but supernatural; the constancy of nature was violated. Here is a clear example of the operation of divine action in violation of natural law and the continuity of nature yet without contradiction of God's good character. Accelerated nuclear decay, as proposed by RATE, was supernaturally induced during creation week and the Flood, during times when the Scriptures clearly state God was performing supernatural acts, and so can also be considered a miracle consistent with God's character.

Dembski says that Russell Humphreys' use of gravity-time dilation to explain how distant starlight could have reached the earth on day 4 of creation week has not borne out in detailed calculations (p. 68-70). He cites several critics of Humphreys' model. However, he seems to have overlooked Humphreys' detailed responses to those critics.<sup>5</sup> Dembski also questions John Baumgardner's Catastrophic Plate Tectonics, again on the continuity grounds. Dembski asserts nature should be investigated without bias or theological presuppositions. He says the right scientific answers are most likely to come when we approach nature without a preconceived idea of the outcome (e.g., young earth). Dembski says he is open to be

convinced that the earth is young but that young earth creationists have so far failed to do so. He says that YECs, instead of presenting a compelling and independent case for their position, enter into a "special pleading" for their interpretation of the evidence. However, even if Dembski is correct in saying the scientific evidence for a young earth is weak, the position of the Scriptures seems clear enough, and that should settle it. Our epistemology should put the Scriptures before all other ways of knowing on issues where Scripture has spoken plainly. Dembski, apparently, does not hold to this rule where nature is concerned.

If Dembski finds the science of YEC wanting, he also questions the theology of some old earth creationists. He rightly points out that Scripture teaches that natural evil came into the world as a result of the Fall of Man. Some old earth creationists have claimed that physical death was just a tool God used in the process of creating without giving consideration to the incongruity of physical death with God's character. However, Dembski finds the scientific interpretations of old earth creationists convincing. Dembski affirms the Big Bang, the antiquity of the fossil record, and the relatively recent appearance of humans in natural history. He embraces uniformitarianism in general. He subscribes to the idea that there are two books of revelation, Scripture and nature, and that each should be understood on its own terms yet without contradiction.

Dembski says there are at least two types of time: *chronos* and *kairos*. *Chronos* is linear time wherein causes always precede effects and time always moves at a steady pace in the same direction: from past to present to future. *Chronos* had a beginning at the dawn of creation and will have an end. *Chronos* is the time in which we mortals live. *Kairos*, by contrast, is "intentional" time or "time with a purpose". *Kairos* is God's time; it is eternity. God does not experience time as *chronos* but as *kairos*, although He is able to move in and out of *chronos* at will. God is transtemporal, meaning He can move throughout *chronos* in both directions. Because God is omniscient and transtemporal, He can anticipate and react to events in *chronos* before they occur. Dembski says this is exactly what God did with respect to the Fall of Man and the entry of sin and natural evil into the world. Before the Fall, Christ had already been crucified for our sins; God made a preemptive strike against sin before it happened. Consider Rev 13:8:

And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain *from the foundation of the world*.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Humphreys DR (2000) Russel Humphreys answers various critics. <[http://www.trueorigin.org/ca\\_rh\\_03.asp](http://www.trueorigin.org/ca_rh_03.asp)> Accessed 2010 May 15

<sup>6</sup> All Scripture references are from the King James version of the Bible. Text in italics is the author's emphasis.

Indeed, bible scholars have long held that Old Testament saints were saved by the blood of Christ because the atonement worked retroactively in history; that is, the effects of Christ's sacrifice extended to times preceding it as well as to the future.<sup>7</sup> Dembski applies this same thinking to the Fall: he says that the natural evil that resulted from the Fall had an impact on the future as well as on the times preceding it. God, foreseeing the Fall, allowed the effects of the Fall to occur in *chronos* before hand. For Dembski, this explains how physical death could be a result of man's sin yet occur in *chronos* prior to the Fall thereby keeping God's good character intact. Hence the record of death, disease, extinction, carnivory, and catastrophes the fossil record must represent for the old earth creationist is explained in a way that does not impugn God.

While a creative attempt to make good theology from an old earth starting point, there are several problems Dembski's position raises.

Dembski also says Noah's Flood was local in keeping with the idea that the fossil record was laid down over hundreds of millions of years instead of rapidly during a global catastrophe. He says that Eden was separated physically and qualitatively from the rest of the earth while Adam and Eve were there. For the brief time of its existence, Eden was a perfect and unfallen place. After the Fall, Adam and Eve were thrust from it into the fallen world already infected by their sin. Dembski says Adam and Eve could have been created separately or taken from a group of hominids and given God's image. Hence Dembski apparently allows the possibility for soulless hominids, akin to Hugh Ross.

For Dembski, Genesis 1 was written from a *kairos* perspective and therefore need not have a direct correspondence to history in *chronos*. Hence while Genesis 1 is to be taken literally, it need not be taken as *chronos* history; the days need not be days as we know them.

To summarize Dembski's view, God foresaw the Fall and let natural evil into the world from the onset because of it. God also provided Christ's sacrifice and redemption from the beginning. Genesis 1 describes the creation but not in *chronos* time but in *kairos* during which billions of years of *chronos* time passed. God created Adam and Eve separately or took a pair from a group of hominids and gave them His image. God put Adam and Eve in Eden, a separate and temporary place unspoiled by sin. Adam and Eve sinned and fell causing natural evil to enter into the world. Adam and Eve were thrown out of Eden and into a world that reminded them of the consequences of

their disobedience. Later God destroyed the human race in a local flood except for Noah and his relatives.

While a creative attempt to make good theology from an old earth starting point, there are several problems Dembski's position raises. First, while the distinction between *chronos* and *kairos* has merit and may be valid in some ways, there is no clear evidence that Genesis 1 was written from a *kairos* perspective.

Indeed, the language used to describe the creation days involves mornings and evenings, light and darkness. The description of the passage of time does not seem to be different before or after the creation of Adam and Eve with the Hebrew word *yom* being used throughout. The word *yom* in Genesis 1:14 clearly refers to literal ordinary *chronos* days without a hint of allegory or *kairos*; why should the other uses of *yom* in the passage be treated any differently? Jesus implied that the creation of Adam and Eve and the natural world were at essentially the same time in Mark 10:6 where he states "...but from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female." Another classic passage that supports the literal day interpretation is Ex 20:10-11:

But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

We are to work six days and rest for one because that is what God did during His "work week". In addition, God describes the creation during creation week as "good" (Gen 1:12, 21, 25) and "very good" (Gen 1:31), language inconsistent with a fallen world full of natural evil.

The idea that Adam and Eve could have existed alongside soulless hominids they could breed with is problematical. Evidence that Neanderthals and *Homo sapiens* interbred will be presented later in the newsletter. Imagine a child of Adam mating with a Neanderthal that was not a descendant of Adam and did not have God's image; what would be the spiritual condition of that individual? No, the Scriptural and scientific evidence are consistent with one human species made in God's image, not reproductively isolated hominid species.

The Flood does appear to have been global. Consider Gen 7:19: "And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered."

<sup>7</sup> For example, see comments by John MacArthur at <<http://www.biblebb.com/files/macqa/1301-T-14.htm>> Accessed 2010 May 18

Also consider 2 Pet 3:5-7:

For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being *overflowed with water*, perished: But the heavens and the *earth*, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, *reserved unto fire against the day of judgment* and perdition of ungodly men.

The Peter passage refers to two judgments: the Flood during the time of Noah and the judgment at the end of the world. Could either judgment be partial? The language implies that the entire world was flooded and that the entire world will be destroyed when the end comes.

Although the science of YEC is still being developed and has a long way to go, there are nevertheless several compelling evidences that support a young earth and/or a global Flood.<sup>8</sup> A short list could include the rate of decay of the earth's magnetic field; the amount of salt in the sea; the regression of the moon from the earth; accelerated nuclear decay as evidenced by the retention of helium in zircons; polonium radiohalos in coal and granite; the rate of demise of comets; catastrophic canyon formation along with precursors to coal and a fossil forest at the Mount Saint Helens eruption; residual radiocarbon in diamonds; evidence for rapid formation of the Grand Canyon (breached dam); the Missoula Flood; polystrate fossil trees; millions of fully articulated fish fossils at the Green River Formation; massive fossil graveyards; "living fossils"; and many others. While the starlight and time problem has not been definitively resolved, Humphreys' gravity-time dilation theory still is in contention. In accordance with Humphreys' theory, there is some evidence that the earth is near the center of the universe<sup>9</sup> and that the universe has a rotation axis.<sup>10</sup> Humphreys

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<sup>8</sup> The interested reader is referred to the Institute of Creation Research ([www.icr.org](http://www.icr.org)), Creation Ministries International ([www.creation.com](http://www.creation.com)), Answers in Genesis ([www.answersingenesis.org](http://www.answersingenesis.org)), and Earth Science Associates ([www.halos.com](http://www.halos.com)) for more information on these topics.

<sup>9</sup> Humphreys DR (2002) Our galaxy is the centre of the universe, 'quantized' redshifts show. J Creation 16(2):95-104 <<http://creation.com/our-galaxy-is-the-centre-of-the-universe-quantized-redshifts-show>> Accessed 2010 May 23

<sup>10</sup> Rasche MD (2003) The 67<sup>th</sup> book of the Bible? The slippery slope of progressive creationism. Acts & Facts 32(6):1-2 <<http://www.icr.org/i/pdf/af/af0306.pdf>> Accessed 2010 May 23

successfully explained the Pioneer effect by applying concepts from his theory.<sup>11</sup>

As stated earlier, if the Scriptures teach a truth clearly, that should settle the issue. Scripture is absolute truth revealed by a perfect God in an inerrant and infallible expression. Science on the other hand, having been invented and maintained by fallen men, is limited and can only arrive at tentative conclusions. Indeed, science is in a continuous state of flux; not so the Scriptures.

William Dembski is a great scholar and Christian whom I respect, but with whom I respectfully disagree when it comes to the age of the earth. ❧

### NEANDERTHALS AND HUMANS INTERBRED!

Previous skeletal evidence had suggested *Homo sapiens* and Neanderthals had interbred.<sup>12</sup> There is now solid genetic evidence that support this claim.<sup>13</sup> The new study shows that most Asians and Europeans have 1-4% Neanderthal DNA. This finding rules out the possibility that Neanderthals were not fully human. There were no soulless hominids living along Adam and Eve as Hugh Ross contends.<sup>14</sup> This discovery is a blow to theistic evolution and progressive creation but is predicted by the creation model. Scripture teaches us that all men are descendants of Adam and Eve.

### SECOND DNA CODE DISCOVERED!

Scientists at the University of Toronto have discovered a second genetic code using computers which "predicts how segments of messenger RNA transcribed from a given gene can be mixed and matched to yield multiple

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<sup>11</sup> Humphreys DR (2007) Creationist cosmologies explain the anomalous acceleration of Pioneer spacecraft. J Creation 21(2):61-70 <[http://creation.com/images/journal\\_of\\_creation/vol21/5181creationist.pdf](http://creation.com/images/journal_of_creation/vol21/5181creationist.pdf)> Accessed 2010 May 18

<sup>12</sup> Reynolds DW (2009) Who were the Neanderthals? <<http://www.tasc-creationscience.org/sites/default/files/newsletters/2009/jan09.pdf>> Accessed 2010 May 23

<sup>13</sup> From Creation/Evolution Headlines (2010 May) <<http://creationsafaris.com/crev201005.htm#20100508a>> Accessed 2010 May 18 referring to: Green RE, Krause J, Briggs AW, Maricic T, Stenzel U, Kircher M, Patterson N, Li H, et al. (2010) A draft sequence of the Neanderthal genome. Science 328 (5979):710-722

<sup>14</sup> From ChristianNewsWire. Scientists sequence Neanderthal genome for first time (2010) <<http://www.christiannewswire.com/news/76489252.html>> Accessed 2010 May 18

products in different tissues, a process called alternative splicing.<sup>15</sup> This time there is no simple table—in its place are algorithms that combine more than 200 different features of DNA with predictions of RNA structure.” In other words, within the genetic material that specifies the amino acid sequences of proteins lies a second instruction set, far more complex than the first, that determines how portions of genes should be recombined and expressed as RNA according to cell and tissue type contexts. The new code (algorithms derived by computers) was successfully used to predict what RNA would be expressed in novel situations. If the probability of evolving the original genetic code is nil, imagine how much more unlikely it would be that a code within a code would evolve by the random chance/natural selection mechanism. For this author, macroevolution has been falsified.

### **NOAH’S ARK DISCOVERED?**

A large wooden structure has been found above the 4000 meter level on Mt. Ararat by a Chinese exploration team.<sup>16</sup> The structure, allegedly C-14 dated at 4800 years old, was photographed and sampled on the inside and out. The story made FOX News. John Morris, president of ICR, is skeptical,<sup>17</sup> while CMI is taking a wait and see approach.<sup>18</sup> Stay tuned!

### **RESPONSE TO CRITICS OF STEPHEN MEYER’S SIGNATURE IN THE CELL**

Several critics of Stephen Meyer’s latest book have published book reviews.<sup>19</sup> Meyer’s book discusses evidence for design in DNA in the form of digital information and how origin of life theories are lacking a credible explanation for that information. Now members of the Discovery Institute have responded to the critics in

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<sup>15</sup> Ledford H (2010 May 5) The code within the code. *Nature* 465:16-17 <<http://www.nature.com/news/2010/100505/full/465016a.html>> Accessed 2010 May 18

<sup>16</sup> Noah’s Ark Ministries International Ltd. (2010) New evidence emerges in the search for Noah’s Ark. Ancient wood structure discovered on Mount Ararat. <<http://www.noahsarksearch.net/eng/release.php>> Accessed 2010 May 18

<sup>17</sup> Dao C (2010 May 5) Chinese explorers claim Noah’s ark find. <<http://www.icr.org/article/chinese-explorers-claim-noahs-ark-find>> Accessed 2010 May 18

<sup>18</sup> Is it Noah’s ark? Wooden structure high on Ararat announced to the world. <<http://creation.com/is-it-noahs-ark>> Accessed 2010 May 18

<sup>19</sup> Reynolds DW (2010) Review of the book *Signature in the Cell* by Stephen C. Meyer <<http://www.tasc-creationscience.org/sites/default/files/newsletters/2010/jan10.pdf>> Accessed 2010 May 23

a book available for free on the internet.<sup>20</sup> Thanks to Henry Middleton for the tip.

### **FREQUENCY OF EARTHQUAKES**

According to the USGS, the worldwide annual frequency of severe earthquakes of magnitude 7 or greater has remained the same (about 18) for the past century.<sup>21</sup> However, many recent major earthquakes have been near heavily populated areas making them more visible to the public.<sup>22</sup> In contrast, the number of smaller magnitude quakes has been on the rise in the last couple of decades, but this may be due to the increasing number of monitoring stations. We know before Christ’s return there will be earthquakes in various places (Matt 24:7, Mk 13:8), perhaps meaning an increase in populated areas. Whatever the case, we know we are to be ready for His return (Mk 13:33).

### **COMING EVENTS**

**Thursday, June 10, 7:00 P.M., Providence Baptist Church, 6339 Glenwood Ave., Raleigh, Room 631**

Jeff Gift, PhD will present recent news regarding what has been reported as "surprisingly" large differences between human and chimpanzee Y chromosomes in structure and gene content. In January, 2010, Jennifer Hughes and colleagues reported on the first unbiased and comprehensive study of the DNA similarity between chimps and humans. In short, the authors state that this new effort reveals that the human Y chromosome looks as different from a chimp as other human chromosomes do from a chicken. Evolutionists must explain this reinvention in terms of common descent, so they speculate that the chimp Y chromosome experienced a major loss of DNA, while humans experienced an unexpected gain. Creationists, of course, have a different explanation that is more consistent with the evidence at hand.

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<sup>20</sup> Berlinski D, Klinghoffer D, Luskin C, Nelson P, Richards J, Sternberg R, Meyer S (2010) *Signature of Controversy: Responses to Critics of Signature in the Cell*, Discovery Institute Press, Seattle, WA <<http://apologetics315.blogspot.com/2010/05/free-ebook-signature-of-controversy.html>> Accessed 2010 May 23

<sup>21</sup> United States Geological Survey (2009 Oct 27) Are earthquakes really on the increase? <[http://earthquake.usgs.gov/learn/topics/increase\\_in\\_earthquakes.php](http://earthquake.usgs.gov/learn/topics/increase_in_earthquakes.php)> Accessed 2010 May 23

<sup>22</sup> United States Geological Survey (2010 Apr 14) Is recent earthquake activity unusual? Scientists say no <<http://www.usgs.gov/newsroom/article.asp?ID=2439>> Accessed 2010 May 23

Contributions can be made at the TASC web site at [www.tasc-creationscience.org](http://www.tasc-creationscience.org) through any of these major credit cards or through PayPal.



Or mail your contribution to: TASC, P.O. Box 12051, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709-2051