

**A Reply to Tom Nettles’  
Review of William A. Dembski’s  
*The End of Christianity:  
Finding a Good God  
in an Evil World***

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**Preamble by Dr. Paige Patterson**

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## Preamble

The recent review by Tom Nettles of a monograph on theodicy by Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's professor, Bill Dembski, presents unique opportunities for interaction among scholars, for careful oversight of seminary administrators, and for creative thought and evangelistic appeal to a scientific community, which too often dismisses the claims of the Bible as irrelevant. As president of Southwestern, I seized the occasion to meet with Bill Dembski. As a young-earth creationist, I do not agree with Dembski's views of the age of the earth or the retroactive effects of the Fall. Indeed, as a "young earther," my own position, which I naturally hold dear, is heavily critiqued in Dembski's book.

The meeting with Dembski confirmed my previous judgments that Dembski is a biblical inerrantist, accepts the historicity of Genesis 1–11, including the special creation of Adam and Eve, and in every other way is teaching as an enthusiastic supporter of the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*. Beyond that, Bill is one of the most humble of the great intellects whom I have ever known personally. In gentleness and great Christian grace, he discharges his duties to family, church, school, and denomination. The mistake about the universality of the flood is abandoned in the comment Dembski offers, which is reflected in David Allen's review.

As the case ought to be among brethren, colleagues, and sister seminaries, Southwestern and its president wish to express gratitude to Tom Nettles for alerting Bill Dembski and all of us to possible problems in his presentation. This is what friends should do. That this can take place in our Southern Baptist Zion with positions stoutly stated but without acrimony demonstrates that diversity of a tolerable variety exists within the unity of our broad fellowship—a unity motivated by love and trumped only by truth.

On the other hand, despite my personal disagreements with Bill Dembski, I have the sense that Nettles did not quite get his evaluation of Dembski right. Consequently, I asked David Allen, Dean of Southwestern's School of Theology, to evaluate the review, which interested parties may read herewith together with Dembski's latest statement on the matter. Our prayer is that the work of all these scholars may be greatly used of God to sharpen us and lead to our more effective witness especially to the scientific community. God bless Bill Dembski, Tom Nettles, and David Allen.

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## **A Reply to Tom Nettles' Review of William A. Dembski's *The End of Christianity: Finding a Good God in an Evil World***

Tom Nettles, professor of Historical Theology at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, has recently written a jarring, highly critical, review of William Dembski's latest book: *The End of Christianity: Finding a Good God in an Evil World*. The review appeared in the *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 13.4 (2009): 80–85. Bill Dembski is Research Professor of Philosophy at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and is a senior fellow with Discovery Institute's Center for Science and Culture in Seattle, Washington. He has been at the forefront of the Intelligent Design movement in recent years, holds two Ph.D.s (philosophy and mathematics), and has published more than a dozen books and numerous articles. Dembski's latest tome is his attempt to address the issue of theodicy from the perspective of one who holds an old-earth creationist perspective.

Specifically, Dembski sets out to propose a possible solution to the problem of natural evil from an old-earth perspective. That is, if animal life was existent on earth for thousands of years before mankind, how does one explain animal carnage and suffering prior to the creation and fall of Adam and Eve? Dembski summarizes his proposal on page 10 as follows: "at the heart of this theodicy is the idea that the effects of the Fall can be retroactive as well as proactive (much as the saving effects of the cross stretch not only forward in time but also backward, saving, for instance, the Old Testament saints)." On page 39, Dembski makes it crystal clear that he traces the origin of natural evil to the personal sin of Adam and Eve (whom he regards as specially created by God) in the Garden of Eden. In short, the problem that Dembski attempts to address is: How can natural evil be traced to Adam and Eve if in fact natural evil in the animal kingdom antedated the creation and fall of Adam and Eve? Dembski points out his theodicy falls within the boundaries of the traditional understanding that natural evil is a result of the Fall: "I am going to argue that full divine foreknowledge of future contingent propositions in fact helps to reconcile God's goodness with the existence of evil. By taking a retroactive approach to the Fall, which traces all evil in the world back to human sin (even the evil that predates human sin), the theodicy I develop preserves the traditional view that natural evil is a consequence of the Fall" (129–30). Thus, according to Dembski, God allows natural evil to exist prior to the Fall but also in response to the Fall. He cites Scripture texts such as Isaiah 65:24 in support of his thesis.

Let me say at the outset that there are a few places where I agree with Nettles' review of *The End of Christianity*. As a young-earth creationist myself, I disagree with Dembski's position on old-earth creationism. Consequently, I see no need to develop a theodicy along the lines that he does since I believe that natural evil does not antedate the creation of Adam and Eve. Certainly there are problems with the young-earth creationist model, and it is clear that Genesis itself, outside of the genealogical tables which may or may not be complete, does not indicate the age of the earth. But there are problems with the old-earth creationist model as well, and these problems are not restricted to a possible reading of Genesis 1–11, but are scientific in nature.

Exactly what is it about *The End of Christianity* that has raised Nettles' hackles so much that he finds the book to be minatory? In order to answer that question, we will review Nettles' review. In the first two paragraphs on page 80, Nettles clearly finds Dembski's retroactive notion of the Fall's effects troubling, primarily it would seem because there is no biblical evidence for such a construct. Nettles' analogy of beating one's child because the father knows the child is going to do something wrong in the future is clearly inaccurate and misrepresents Dembski's whole point. The analogy breaks down because no earthly father is omniscient and thus in a position to know *in advance* how and when his child will misbehave. Earthly fathers are not omniscient nor are they outside of the space-time-matter continuum, but God is. He not only knows what will happen before it happens, but according to Dembski, God is capable of anticipating future actions and results in such a way that their consequences are then retroactively applied before the event takes place in history. As Dembski presents it in *The End of Christianity*, natural evil is present in the world before the Fall and yet is experienced by humans only after they actually fall because they are in the Garden, a special segregated area that is spared from the effects of evil. Nettles may not agree with Dembski's construal of things at this point, but his spanking analogy is simply flawed.

While Nettles is correct in his agreement with Dembski that God's "gracious divine anticipation . . . rests on firm biblical exposition" (80), he is incorrect when he speaks of Dembski's position as "the creation of a fallen world" (80) as though it were God's intention to create such a world from the start. Dembski clearly presents the fallenness of the world as a *consequence* of human sin and stresses throughout his book that God's initial intention for the world was good. God does not create a fallen world. God creates a good world. As Dembski emphasizes, its fallenness constitutes a subsequent corruption.

In the next two paragraphs Nettles surveys the purpose and methodology of the Intelligent Design movement, a movement that supports Christianity in its fight against naturalism and materialism, and rightly praises Dembski for his leadership in and contribution to it (80–81). In the first full paragraph on page 81, Nettles correctly outlines the approach of "the Christian apologist" to the Bible (special revelation) and to "other sources of revelation, such as general revelation in conscience and nature" (81). So far so good. In the second paragraph on page 81, Nettles states: "Dembski has subdued the gown of theology to the lab robe of the scientist. He has given to natural revelation the task of tutor to special revelation." This statement is not accurate given the thrust and argument of the entire book. While Dembski struggles with wearing both the theologian's robe and the scientist's lab coat (Who among us doesn't?), he is clearly committed to the proposition that science cannot trump the Bible. After all, it is the scientific guild that clings tenaciously to evolutionary dogma, a position which Dembski rejects while wearing both his theological robe and his scientific lab coat. He does interpret the Bible in light of an old-earth creationist perspective, but even if one holds to the young-earth position, it should be noted that one is not consequently obliged to interpret the creation days of Genesis 1 as literal twenty-four hour days, though most probably do so.

Dembski does not believe that the "scientific assertions" he references are undeniable, as Nettles suggests. The "orthodoxy" of these statements refers to the attitude with which the scientific community regards them, not Dembski's own beliefs about them. On page 81 Nettles' assertion that Dembski believes the universe is 13 billion years old and the earth is around 4.5 billion years old is an "undeniable conclusion that provides an infallible scientific framework for theological discussion." But where does Dembski say this? Nettles is assuming Dembski affirms this. Nettles seems to miss the fact that Dembski's book is an exercise in speculative theology.

Assuming an old-earth creationist model (a legitimate position simpatico with the parameters of the Baptist Faith and Message), he formulates a careful argument for how it is possible to preserve a traditional understanding of the Fall that attributes natural evil to the Fall even though the Fall occurs temporally after the appearance of natural evil. Dembski's retroactive view of the Fall's effects works off the assumption of an old earth, but nowhere does Dembski suggest that this assumption is inviolable or that science has once and for all proven that the earth is old or that science has conclusively proven any of its other claims. In his faith-science classes at Southwestern, he always discusses the issue of "pessimistic induction," according to which one is justified being skeptical of any scientific claim because most scientific claims of the past have had to be radically revised or jettisoned. It is simply inaccurate to suggest, as does Nettles, that Dembski is subordinating theology to science. He is asking, in a non-dogmatic fashion, what theology would look like *if* one assumes certain claims of science.

When Nettles raises the question of biblical inerrancy and the fallibility of science on page 81, he seems to raise a question about Dembski's commitment to both. Dembski is an inerrantist and he clearly affirms that science is not infallible (see his clarification below). Nettles makes unwarranted assumptions about what Dembski believes about what is and is not accurate science. There is a world of difference between Dembski's statements that the "scientific community" believes such and such and Nettles' statements that Dembski himself agrees with all of these beliefs of the scientific community (81). This is a huge blind spot plaguing Nettles' review.

On page 81, last paragraph, Nettles says Dembski has "some hints at penal substitution (18, 24)." They appear to be more than hints to me. Nettles says: "His overall explanation of the cross has elements of A.H. Strong's immanentism and seems more attuned to moral influence and moral government than to propitiatory sacrifice." This is an inaccurate description of what Dembski actually said. What Dembski does say clearly affirms the atonement is most definitely a propitiatory sacrifice. He says nothing concerning whether he also thinks the atonement might be viewed from the perspective of moral influence and/or moral government. Nettles rightly notes (and affirms Dembski for doing so) that Dembski's book challenges process theology and open theism and is thoroughly Trinitarian.

Nettles continues his unwarranted assumptions on page 82 and fails to note that what Dembski is doing is writing to people who have accepted certain scientific results with respect to the age of the earth and then find they must reconcile these results with the Bible. Interestingly, at no point does Nettles indicate that the old-earth position is a legitimate Christian option. Though he does not state it overtly, he seems to deny that one can be an orthodox Christian and subscribe to an old earth creationist position.

Nettles argues that Dembski's claim that he makes no assumption about the age of the earth and that he does not look to science for support of his proposal "rings hollow" (82). If one looks carefully at what Dembski actually says on page 10, a different picture emerges: "In arguing that the Fall marks the entry of all evil into the world (both personal and natural evil), I make no assumptions about the age of the Earth, the extent of evolution, or the prevalence of design. The theodicy I develop here looks not to science but to the metaphysics of divine action and purpose." Notice carefully what Dembski is and is not saying here. Obviously, Dembski has certain assumptions and beliefs about the age of the earth, the extent of evolution and the prevalence of design in the created order. His point is that his theodicy proposal is not *based on* these issues, but rather is based on his understanding of what he can glean from Scripture about how God purposes and works. He is arguing his position on the assumption that old-earth

creationism is accurate; he is not arguing his position using old-earth science for support. There is a clear distinction here that Nettles fails to make.

On page 82 Nettles writes of the young-earth position as being “the virtually universal Christian understanding of Genesis 1–3.” Dembski agrees that this has been the overwhelmingly held view up through the Reformation, but shows that this view is no longer universally held. Indeed, precisely for this reason, Dembski wrote his book. Science has raised a challenge, and Dembski explores the ramifications of this challenge. Nettles quotes Dembski as writing that science has discovered “momentous new truths,” and thus ascribes to him a view of science that places it above or on a par with Scripture (82). However, Dembski nowhere does this. Indeed, Nettles quotes Dembski out of context. The phrase “momentous new truths” appears at the end of chapter 5 where Dembski writes: “For science to trump the most natural reading of Genesis and the overwhelming consensus of theologians up through the Reformation, either science has discovered momentous new truths or science has gone massively awry. In either case, science has raised a crucial challenge to young-earth creationism. Let us now turn to that challenge” (54).

The point to recognize is that Dembski himself recognizes science’s fallibility, allowing that, on the age of the earth, it may have gone massively awry. Dembski wrote his book because science has raised a challenge, not because, as Nettles suggests, Dembski thinks that science is inviolable. In fact, Dembski, in this book and throughout his writings and lectures, carefully nuances the degree to which scientific claims are confirmed and credible. For example, on page 161 of *The End of Christianity*, Dembski states directly that scientific conclusions are not to be received uncritically: “Unfortunately, scientific research can be suitably slanted to support just about anything.”

On page 82, Nettles quotes Dembski as saying: data that require an old earth “trumps the most natural reading of Genesis and the overwhelming consensus of theologians up through the Reformation” and infers from this that Dembski himself agrees. This is an egregious misuse of Dembski’s words resulting from a failure to note the context. Nettles again quotes Dembski: “Today this traditional reading of Genesis seems less reasonable” (82). Nettles quotes Dembski as if he (Dembski) sees it as less reasonable, but in fact the context on page 35 of the book begs us to ask the question, “Less reasonable for whom?” and the answer is in Dembski’s words in context: “the current mental environment.”

On page 82–83, Nettles finds fault with Dembski’s view that God disorders the creation on purpose. I would have preferred that Dembski had stated this differently to avoid misunderstanding. Better would be something along the lines of “As a result of the Fall, God permitted the disordering of creation.” Having said that, however, it should be noted that what Dembski says here is merely standard Christian theology, namely, that the creation gets disrupted as a consequence of God’s curse in response to the Fall. Nettles calls this a “difficulty” in Dembski’s account, but it is a difficulty that faces young-earth as well as old-earth creationists. Nettles also describes it as “a mystery” how the creation could experience the effects of the Fall before Adam and Eve actually fell (in space and time). However, Dembski addresses this in chapter 14 (see specifically page 109), arguing that God acts not only in time but across time and thus can transform that past. Dembski also underscores the crucial role of the Garden of Eden in the Fall, asking why, if the world at large has not experienced the effects of the Fall, did God have to place Adam and Eve in a segregated area (the Garden) that was perfect and free from the Fall? If the Fall had not affected the world at large, then why have a garden at all—would not the whole world be a garden? Whether one accepts this line of argument from

Dembski, a careful reading of him makes clear that he is sensitive to exegetical concerns and is not trying to spin a theology without anchoring it in the Bible.

On page 83 Nettles again characterizes Dembski as slavishly embracing the science of the day, failing to accept that Dembski is engaged in speculative theology, analyzing the Fall *on the assumption* that the earth is old. Nettles characterizes Dembski as ridiculing the young-earth position. This seems unfair to me and appears to be an example of the fact that one man's critique is another man's ridicule. It all depends on whose ox is being gored! Dembski is critical of the young-earth position to be sure, but he is equally critical of the standard old-earth position that tries to minimize natural evil (such as animal suffering) and explain it away apart from the Fall (see chapter 9, entitled "The Problem with Old-Earth Creationism"). Dembski is a vigorous debater, but he is not disrespectful to the young-earth position.

Nettles opines on page 83 that Dembski offers "slender" exegetical evidence for his case. Though "slender" is less than "strong," it is more than "nothing." Dembski does offer an exegetical argument for his interpretation of Genesis 1–3, novel though it may be. It does not have the same exegetical backing as the retroactive effects of the cross in saving Old Testament saints, but it is not as "slender" as Nettles suggests. One should perhaps note that the index of *The End of Christianity* contains no less than 157 individual Scripture references, some of which are cited more than once in the book. This fact also negates Nettles' overstated comment that "Dembski is driven solely by his commitment to old-earth scientific orthodoxy." The operative word here is "solely" and its use makes the statement untrue. Dembski is not driven *solely* by old-earth scientific orthodoxy. He is driven partially by the old-earth view and what he believes is entailed by it, but he is also driven by Scripture in his interpretation of it.

Nettles' misreading of Dembski continues in his comments on page 83. He charges Dembski with moving Genesis 1 to the realm of *kairos* (God's time) and thus denying that the events there happened in *chronos* (ordinary space-time). But Dembski makes clear that *kairos* and *chronos* are not mutually exclusive and do indeed intersect. As he writes in chapter 16: "When the visible and invisible realms intersect, *kairos* becomes evident within *chronos*. The creation of the world and the incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity are the preeminent instances of this intersection" (126). Thus, to say that Genesis 1 happens in *kairos* is not to deny that it also happens in *chronos*. As the context of *The End of Christianity* validates and Dembski's own clarification statement below makes unambiguously clear, he accepts Genesis 1–11 (and thus Genesis 1 in particular) as happening in ordinary space-time. It therefore fundamentally misrepresents Dembski's position to claim, as Nettles does, that the days in Genesis 1 do not have any palpable existence. Nettles is actually on dangerous theological ground here because he seems to suggest that what God does in *kairos* is unreal, but in fact spiritual realities are, according to Scripture, even more real than material realities: "The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor 4:18). In Exodus 25:40, God tells Moses, "And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shown you in the mount." The pattern in heaven is as real as its embodiment on earth. Dembski denies neither. It is therefore misleading and unfair for Nettles to characterize Dembski's reading of Genesis 1 as though he were pushing it off to some theological/philosophical never-never land. Dembski, as his work on intelligent design reveals, is as much a "realist" about creation as anyone, as his comments on page 142 make clear.

On page 84, one should note, *contra* Nettles, that Dembski affirms the existence of the original creation as "good," but it was transformed through the Fall, wherein God changed not only the history ensuing from the Fall but, according to Dembski, the history leading up to it.

The good creation existed not only in the mind of God but in the act of creation itself. Nettles is also wrong about Adam being confronted by “wild and vicious, predatory, and blood-thirsty” animals. As Dembski argues, Adam was created in a segregated hermetic area, the Garden, in which he was shielded from such animals (and natural evils more generally). Again, the point here is not whether one agrees with Dembski’s construal. Obviously, Nettles does not, and neither do I for that matter. Nevertheless, to misread and misstate what Dembski has in fact said does him a disservice and must be corrected.

In the third and fourth paragraphs on page 84, Nettles takes exception to Dembski’s drawing on Tillich for the *chronos-kairos* distinction, but this attempt to disparage the distinction because it is associated with so heterodox a thinker as Tillich is clearly an unfair tactic. Nettles fails to mention that Dembski also cites Arndt and Gingrich’s lexicon as well as the work of Lee Irons and Meredith Kline in explicating the distinction. Again, Nettles tries to cast Dembski as denying the historicity of Genesis, but this charge can only hold if *kairos* and *chronos* are mutually exclusive, which Dembski denies. Also, Nettles implies that the distinction is bogus because *chronos* and *kairos* are at times used interchangeably in the New Testament, but such an argument is fallacious. Just because words are sometimes used synonymously does not mean that in certain contexts they may not have significantly different meanings. This is a matter of lexical semantics. In the final sentence of the last full paragraph on page 84 Nettles says: “it seems entirely appropriate that Dembski employ the Tillichian distinction [between *chronos* and *kairos*] for he indicates no more assent to the historical nature of the creation narrative than Tillich does of the particular, personal, and unique character of the incarnation.” This statement is incredible on many fronts. First, it is patently untrue as any careful reading of the book reveals. Second, it engages in the fallacy of guilt by association. Third, to be blunt, the statement is nothing short of a cheap shot and has no place in a scholarly review.

In the first complete paragraph on page 85 Nettles claims that Dembski regards Genesis 4–11 as consisting of “highly dubious claims,” attributing this quote to Dembski. In context, however, Dembski says something quite different: “A face-value chronological reading of these chapters requires, among other things, acceptance of the following highly dubious claims (dubious, that is, in the current mental environment)” (170). Dembski, as an outspoken critic of Darwinian evolution, has never been a fan of “current mental environments” in the scientific or philosophical worlds. The criticisms which Nettles’ launches against Dembski’s supposed “intellectual discomfort” (85) concerning the historicity of people and events in Genesis 1–11 are rendered null and void by a careful reading of Dembski’s context. It is the “current mental environment” that finds these things “dubious,” not Dembski.

In Nettles’ conclusion, he attempts to land a few final punches, only one of which hits the mark. Nettles charges Dembski with introducing “circumlocutions” (85) when the distinction between *kairos* and *chronos* is thoroughly grounded philologically and has a long history. Nettles invokes the specters of Ralph Elliott and C.H. Toy (85), but Dembski upholds Mosaic authorship of Genesis, rejects higher criticism, and is not an evolutionist, unlike Elliott and Toy. Nettles casts Dembski as embracing “naturalistic assumptions,” but through his work on intelligent design Dembski has proven himself one of the foremost challengers of naturalism. Nettles claims Dembski teaches that “Genesis 1 simply did not happen.” Frankly, in light of the book as a whole, in light of what Dembski says in the second paragraph on page 142, where he speaks of the creation account in Genesis 1 as “literal,” and in light of Dembski’s other writings, this statement is simply ludicrous. Dembski is fully committed to the events recounted in Genesis 1 as occurring in ordinary space-time history (see his own clarification below). Finally, as if to

pound the last nail in the coffin, Nettles accuses Dembski of seeing “the subjection to futility as an act of creation” (85). But Dembski states clearly that the effects of the Fall do not, and indeed cannot, constitute part of God’s creative activity: “Evil does not create. It only deforms” (145). Dembski is thus entirely orthodox about evil not being creative; in his view, it is entirely deformative. Dembski’s positions simply will not result in the menticide of evangelicals as Nettles seems to fear.

In Nettles’ entire review, there is only one place where he lands a solid punch, and that is in the latter part of his penultimate paragraph. Nettles cites Dembski saying: “Noah’s flood, though presented as a global event, is probably best understood as historically rooted in a local event” (85). Here Dembski raises questions about the historicity of the universality of the Genesis flood. Since the publication of *The End of Christianity*, Dembski has repudiated this statement, admitting that his exegetical investigations into Genesis 4–11 with respect to the flood were problematic and that, as a biblical inerrantist, he is committed to the clear teaching of Scripture on the Flood and its universality. In fact, in light of the harsh critique of Nettles, Dembski has responded with his own “Clarification Regarding My Book *The End of Christianity*”:

My book *The End of Christianity* is a work of speculative theology. It assumes that the earth and universe are old and, given that assumption, attempts to answer how the Fall of humanity could be responsible for natural evil, such as animal suffering. Since, on the assumption of an old earth, animal suffering precedes the arrival of humans, the challenge is to explain how the effect (natural evil) can temporally precede the cause (human sin and the Fall). My solution is to argue that just as the effects of salvation at the Cross of Christ reach both forward in time (saving contemporary Christians) and backward (saving the Old Testament saints), so the effects of the Fall reach forward in time as well as backward. What makes my argument work is the ability of God to arrange events at one time to *anticipate* events at a later time.

From the vantage of a young earth, my book may seem like a vain exercise (given a young earth, natural evil comes directly after the Fall and is a clear consequence of it). Yet, the evidence of science suggests that the earth and universe are much older than the chronologies in Genesis 1–11 would indicate. It is classical Christian orthodoxy that the Fall of humanity was responsible for both moral evil (the evil that humans commit against each other) and natural evil (the evil that nature commits against creatures capable of experiencing pain). Has science conclusively proved its case that the earth is old? Science is not infallible, and readers of my book should not interpret it as proclaiming otherwise. My book is not an attack on the young-earth position. Rather, it is an attempt to create conceptual space for the old-earth position in light of Christian orthodoxy, which has always taught that the Fall is responsible for both moral and natural evil.

If I were to write *The End of Christianity* now, I would do several things differently. At the top of the list of things I would change is its problematic treatment of Genesis 4–11. The book’s main focus is Genesis 1–3, and my argument for “the retroactive effects of the Fall” does not require going beyond these first three chapters. Yet, in a brief section on Genesis 4–11, I weigh in on the Flood, raising questions about its universality, without adequate study or reflection on my part. Before I write on this topic again, I have much exegetical,

historical, and theological work to do. In any case, not only Genesis 6–9 but also Jesus in Matthew 24 and Peter in Second Peter seem clearly to teach that the Flood was universal. **As a biblical inerrantist, I believe that what the Bible teaches is true and bow to the text, including its teaching about the Flood and its universality.**

In writing *The End of Christianity* today, I would also underscore three points: (1) **As a biblical inerrantist**, I accept the full verbal inspiration of the Bible and the conventional authorship of the books of the Bible. Thus, in particular, I accept Mosaic authorship of Genesis (and of the Pentateuch) and reject the Documentary Hypothesis. (2) Even though I introduce in the book a distinction between *kairos* (God's time) and *chronos* (the world's time), the two are not mutually exclusive. In particular, I accept that the events described in Genesis 1–11 happened in ordinary space-time, and thus that these chapters are as historical as the rest of the Pentateuch. (3) I believe that Adam and Eve were real people, that as the initial pair of humans they were the progenitors of the whole human race, that they were specially created by God, and thus that they were not the result of an evolutionary process from primate or hominid ancestors. (William A. Dembski)

Dembski's statement should go a long way in clarifying what he has written in *The End of Christianity*, his own views on science, Scripture, the creation account in Genesis, and the extent of the Genesis flood. **While I remain unconvinced of the old-earth creationist model which Dembski champions, *The End of Christianity* is a remarkable, even fascinating, contribution toward a Christian theodicy assuming such a model. Though conversant with both biblical exegesis and systematic theology, Dembski's book is best described as an exercise in speculative theology/philosophy for an apologetic purpose. Viewed with this purpose in mind, *The End of Christianity* is a missionary tome and should be lauded as an attempt to help fulfill Christ's Great Commission to proclaim the gospel.**

In conclusion, what are we to make of Nettles' review? First, the review appears at times to be something of a pastiche; drawing now from one chapter, then in the next sentence jumping 50 pages to another point. This approach fails to treat the book's argument systematically.

Second, Nettles has subjected the book to a less than careful reading at many points. He should have heeded Dembski's advice on page xviii: "*Postscript. Twenty percent of this book consists of explanatory and reference notes. A careful reading therefore requires attention to the notes.*" Had he done so, or at least had he taken the footnotes into consideration, many of his criticisms would have never found their way into his review or at the very least would have been significantly mitigated. Nettles has simply misunderstood Dembski at several points. **Dembski's writing style is generally pellucid, but it is safe to say he could have been, and in fact should have been, clearer in some of his statements. If one reads the book in a cursory fashion, one might come away with the feeling that Dembski has ceded too much ground to science and has himself imbibed too much of its dogmatic notions.** Nettles appears to be assuming from Dembski's writing style that he has bought into the typical evolutionary scientific mindset on some issues. Nothing could be further from the truth! Dembski's own clarification above dispels such a notion. Even so, the careful reader should have picked up on the fact that Dembski is writing to those within the scientific community in descriptive fashion using *their* terminology and mindset without necessarily committing himself to either. Given the overall context of the book, Dembski is clear enough to dispel the sometimes egregious errors Nettles makes in the

review. He might have extended to Dembski the courtesy of asking him if he had understood him correctly.

Nettles' failure here causes him to subject Dembski to a less than charitable read, especially in light of Dembski's other published works. The result is a significantly skewed review. Most of Nettles' criticisms are nugatory and thus miss the mark. Let the reader read carefully *The End of Christianity: Finding a Good God in an Evil World*, Nettles' review, Dembski's own remarks above . . . and judge for himself.

# **Dr. David L. Allen**

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