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# Stars Beneath Us: Finding God In The Evolving Cosmos



## Synopsis

In ways both confident and gentle, *Stars Beneath Us* brilliantly shows God's presence in the ever-evolving cosmos. Relying on his upbringing as a Baptist, his doctoral work in experimental nuclear physics and gamma-ray astronomy, and his ordination to the gospel ministry in the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Paul Wallace weaves a book unlike any other in faith and science literature. Instead of engaging the debates of natural theology or proofs for the existence of God, this is a call to courage for those who fear a true encounter with the cosmos will distance them from God. With a winsome mix of compelling personal narrative and insightful biblical analysis, the author calls into perspective the scale of the cosmos and our place within it. Relying on a theology of openness to the world, *Stars Beneath Us* will inspire readers to engage with the natural world in new ways and find God, as it turns out, everywhere.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book is strongly recommended for anyone who wants to read about a commitment to both faith and science that doesn't back away from either the faith or the science. Wallace tells us the story of how he came to embrace the modern scientific understanding of the world (geologic time scales, biological evolution, Big Bang cosmology, etc), and how he initially found this scientific view to be at odds with his religion. He goes on to show how the apparent incompatibility between science and Christian faith is not a necessary situation, but is instead a product of a medieval view of God. Medieval theologians understood God in a way that fit with their understanding of the cosmos (a

finite sphere in which the nasty chaos of earth was separated from the perfect ethereal realms of the heavens). Our understanding of the cosmos has changed but, as Wallace points out, our view of God has been slow to adjust. Wallace goes on to show that the Bible itself, specifically the Book of Job, points the way toward an understanding of God that is fully compatible with modern science. Will Wallace's book convert Young Earth Creationists to science, or New Atheists to Christianity? No, it won't, particularly since he does not hesitate to point out his disagreements with both of those groups. But what Wallace accomplishes is to create a space where both faith and science are welcome. His book is not a propaganda piece: he is not trying to convince Christians to embrace science or scientists to embrace Christianity. He is telling his own story, and grounding that story in his understanding of science (which is considerable) and his close reading of Job. It is a personal story: his reasons for loving science may not be your reasons (if you have them), his reasons for his Christian faith may not be your reasons (if you have them). But what Wallace makes clear is that it is possible to love science and have faith, and to be simultaneously honest to both. If you think that religious faith and scientific understanding are both important parts of human life, I urge you to read Wallace's book. It will help you see how these two quintessential (ah, there's that medieval cosmos again!) human activities can both find a place within a single human life.

Strongly recommended for those interested in the tension between religion and science. It's an explanation of why an accomplished physicist returned to faith after years of skepticism. It's a challenging read, and many will be disturbed by some of his points. Nevertheless, this thought-provoking account that wrestles with important issues that too often we dismiss with simplistic answers. And you will never look at The Book of Job the same way again!

When I stumbled across this book, I immediately knew that I needed to read it. I'm glad that I did. The author presented some new ways for me to consider God and science without having to exclude either one from the conversation. By using personal accounts from his past and the struggles he has experienced along the way, Mr. Wallace further humanizes the subject in a way that's reflective of how many of us struggle with this cosmic puzzle. I hope this is just the first of many books he plans to write from his much appreciated perspective.

I wasn't a student of Dr. Wallace, but I did work as a student under him in the Physics Department nearly two decades ago. Dr. Wallace seemed to me in our brief passing of that one semester to be very thoughtful and thought provoking. That's what primarily motivated me to buy this book. The

book as a whole wasn't what I expected, but perhaps it is what I needed. I have wrestled with many of the ideas he has wrestled with and indeed anyone with an education and career rooted in science and a strong Christian background will wrestle with. As I write this, we in America are in the middle of a culture war: the Young Earth Creationists opposed to the New Atheists (with many more folks in the middle). Yet often the expressions of "I'm right and you're wrong" are the one thing these two groups tend to agree upon. Like Dr. Wallace, I've grown tired of the tug of war. The general themes of the book are love, honesty, and humility. It's about letting go of what you believe enough to allow God to teach you what is true in this Cosmos He's placed us in. It's about admitting what we don't know. I don't think I come to exactly the same conclusions as Dr. Wallace on how to characterize God and His relation with the Cosmos, however I can mostly agree it's time we exemplify God in love for each other, love for the natural world, and the creatures in it. It's time we were honest that there are paradoxes in our understanding and quite frankly we know little compared to what there is to be known. I also agree we should grapple with what we do know instead of dismissing it out of preference for truths that favor our position. Lastly, that we understand our place in the Cosmos. We may not have the special attention of God or be the crowning glory of his creation (to be frank, the Bible declares other creatures greater than ourselves). We are not the center of it all. In short order, that is what I got out of Dr. Wallace's book. It, like the universe, is full of paradox and ambiguity that many people are not going to like. I disagree with Dr. Wallace on points of God's power and interest in humanity, or at least my reading of it. I think Dr. Wallace paints a God who altered reality rather than manifesting it. Who stands squarely in and is unable to be decoupled from the universe. I see God as fully inhabiting the universe but as existing separate from it. I think Dr. Wallace paints a God who does the best He can with constraints over Him. I see God as doing the best He can without coming into contradiction with Himself. The universe is an engineered work of God and full of compromises necessarily. I think Dr. Wallace paints a God who can be confused with being indifferent towards us instead of loving us. I see God as loving us so much it hurts and yet loving no one else or nothing else any less. Perhaps I am confused, however, on what he is saying because some statements and conclusions in the book are paradoxical. Let's be honest, I don't know for sure that the image of God in my head squares with reality. I'm also not certain that the image Dr. Wallace paints in my head does either. And that's what the book was ultimately about to me: being open, honest, and humble. Being present and loving and living out the salvation God gives us in Jesus now. It's about taking our God given place within the world rather than centering our world around us. The book was a well worthwhile read, pleasant in all respects, and well done.

I am really enjoying this book. Dr. Wallace writes from a personal point of view that is very easy to understand. He uses great illustrations that everyone can relate to. This is a great book for anyone seeking to understand the link between religion and science.

Dr Wallace writes a compelling story about the juxtaposition of science and faith. His personal journey of faith which led through believing, doubt and back to believing with a new understanding of God is equally compelling. Dr Wallace uses the book of Job in the Old Testament to convey the positive relationship between science and faith in an exciting way that will make you think and want to learn more. It grabbed my attention from the beginning with the explanation for the title, Stars Beneath Us, and held on until the end.

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