



*The Wonder of
the Universe:
Hints of God in Our
Fine-Tuned World*

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The Wonder of the World

The night sky still beckons us, as it once did the psalmist. I spend time each summer at a rustic family cottage in the wilderness of my native New Brunswick, Canada. There, miles from electricity, the night sky does not compete with artificial light. Smog does not obscure it. Planes do not draw white trails on it. It does not compete with cable television or even cell phones, silenced by the absence of signals. The night sky is simply there, quietly declaring the glory of God. Its many lights reflect off the ripples of the lake, and are accompanied by the rustling of leaves and the voices of the many creatures that call this wilderness home. Only a jaded soul could sit by that lake and not wonder if there wasn't some larger meaning to the experience.

I can see what the psalmist saw and rejoice as he did. But I watch the night sky through the eyes of a twenty-first-century scientist. I have the benefit of centuries of scientific advancement and can see, in my mind's eye, so much more. Those visible stars are just the advance guard of an almost infinite army of stars going back almost forever. The stars are not attached to a dome that one might reach with an ambitiously tall tower or puncture with a long-range missile. They are so far away that their light has been traveling at unimaginable speed for years, centuries, millennia and longer. The light from the stars in the Hyades Cluster began its journey to the earth at about the time that my ancestors—Loyalists from Pennsylvania—began their journey to this part of North America in the eighteenth century. The light from the *closest* stars, the trio that make up Alpha Centauri, takes over four years to reach earth. The most distant star ever detected from the earth is a “gamma ray burster” that launched its signal almost 13 billion years ago, when the universe was young. The powerful gamma ray signal from this star began its journey before our planet was even formed, reaching the earth in April 2009.

The psalmist did not know that the stars were made of hydrogen and helium. He did not know they generated their energy through nuclear fusion or that many of them explode at the end of their lives. He knew nothing of galaxies and the layers of structure in the cosmos. He did not understand how fast light travels or that the light from our sun powers photosynthesis and many other processes here on the earth.

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The universe brought into view by science is like a collection of Russian matryoshka dolls nestled one inside the other. With the psalmist we can see the outer layer—and it is grand. But inside are additional layers, each one with a new type of grandeur. And at the very end of the unpacking lie the remarkable laws of physics that keep the earth orbiting about the sun, the sun shining reliably and the sunlight providing energy to sustain life on our planet.

The universe as we understand it today inspires awe. And for those open to its message—from the psalmists of yesteryear to the believers and even the thoughtful skeptics of today—it speaks of a Creator. Our universe does not look like a cosmic accident, where lots of stuff just happened. It looks like the expression of a grand plan—a cosmic architecture capable of both supporting life such as ours and of inspiring observers like us to seek out the Creator.

This is why Antony Flew—“world’s most notorious atheist”—changed his mind and started believing in God.

In the pages that follow I want to share this story with you. We live in a world of wonder. Only the flattest of lukewarm souls is not moved by the grandeur of our universe. Most of us find the universe truly awesome. And, while not everyone comes to believe in a Creator, there are few that can simply shrug their shoulders and set aside the mystery of our existence. Looked at in the right way, the modern scientific picture draws us ever deeper into this wonder, into the mind of the Creator.

—From the introduction, “Following the Evidence Where it Leads”



Karl W. Giberson (Ph.D.) is an internationally known scholar whose work has been translated into several languages. He is a popular speaker and writer, and directs the Science & Religion writing workshop at Gordon College. Giberson has published over two hundred articles, reviews and essays and written nine books, including *Saving Darwin* and, with Francis Collins, *The Language of Science and Faith*.

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Giberson says science affirms belief in creator

What motivated you to write this book?

I wrote *The Wonder of the Universe* so Christians would have a positive face for science. By far the majority of the books published by evangelical presses provide negative views of science. Central scientific ideas like evolution and cosmology are criticized; scientists are vilified as secular and even anti-religious. Loud voices like Richard Dawkins are presented as typical, when in fact they are fringe. Christians need to understand that science is not the enemy of faith. Quite the contrary—the long history of science and many of the deepest insights of today are faith-affirming.

What is the central thesis of your book?

The Wonder of the Universe provides a faith-friendly look at science, including its history and philosophy and some of its current theories. The book is one of the few from a leading evangelical press that treats science with the respect it deserves, rather than suggesting that there is something sinister in science that Christians should fear. In particular, I want readers to understand that they can bring their belief in God as Creator to science and find that belief affirmed.

Can you give an example of how science affirms a Creator?

The big bang theory has been strongly criticized by some Christians as being an atheistic alternative to the Genesis statement “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The big bang theory, originally proposed by a Christian physicist, was criticized for being a scientific restatement of the first verse in Genesis. The atheistic view at the time was that the universe was eternal. An eternal universe does not need a God to get it going, of course. If the universe had a real beginning, which the big bang says it does, that creates a need for some explanation for how things got started. And this, of course, opens the door to the possibility that God caused the big bang. The big bang invites theological speculation; it does not close it off.