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The Prophet and the Astronomer: A Scientific Journey to the End of Time

By Marcelo Gleiser



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From the beginning of time people have looked to the heavens to find order in the universe and divine meaning and direction from celestial events. The same skies that used to instil fear in the ancient prophets today spawn a rich apocalyptic science for awestruck stargazers. This book explores the shared quest of prophets and astronomers to explain the strange phenomena of our skies - from the apocalypse foretold in Revelations to modern science's identification of multiple cataclysmic threats, including the impact of comets and asteroids on earthly life, the likelihood of future collisions, the meaning of the solar eclipse and the death of stars, the implications of black holes for time travel and the ultimate fate of the universe and time.



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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

As in his popular *The Dancing Universe*, Gleiser (physics and astronomy, Dartmouth Coll.) argues that science and religion spring from a single challenge to the human spirit: anxiety over our mortality, which defines us and gives our life meaning. Thus, the different narratives used by science (the Big Crunch) and religion (the apocalypse) to reconcile our finite existence with an apparently infinite universe are not mutually exclusive; they share an awareness of our limited time on Earth, which motivates us to understand the universe and our place in it. While Gleiser offers an extensive discussion of modern scientific cosmology, his account is not overly technical and is easily accessible to the average reader. One measure of how much a reader has enjoyed a book is the number of margin notes and underlined passages that mark the text, and this reviewer's copy has been copiously highlighted in three different colors. Strongly recommended for both public and academic libraries. James Olson, Northeastern Illinois Univ. Lib., Chicago
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From [Booklist](#)

(*Starred Review*) A rare astrophysicist as comfortable quoting Scripture as explaining formulas, Gleiser ponders the dark parallels between the apocalyptic visions of ancient seers and the cosmic predictions of modern scientists. In refreshing contrast to theorists who dismiss all prescientific cosmology as mere superstition, Gleiser recognizes the imaginative authenticity of humanity's earliest astral terrors. Eclectic scholarship clarifies how fully a cosmic collision could fulfill the grimmest ancient prophecy--how, in fact, such a collision probably wiped out the dinosaurs and how such a collision occasion nearly occurred again in 1996 when a stray asteroid unexpectedly brushed by the earth. But from the conjunction between the oldest religions and the newest science, Gleiser draws more than reasons for terror. In the profound human craving for unity that monotheism has nurtured, he locates the impulse now spurring researchers toward new models of the universe that will finally reveal the beginning and end of galactic time. Gleiser's musings--about how leptons might transmute into quarks, for instance--occasionally will baffle the nonspecialist, but most readers will consider a few moments of perplexity a small price to pay for the opportunity to probe humanity's oldest nightmares and newest aspirations. *Bryce Christensen*

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Review

"An intellectual accomplishment that illuminates the magic and the wisdom of the heavens above."

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Richard Segers:

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