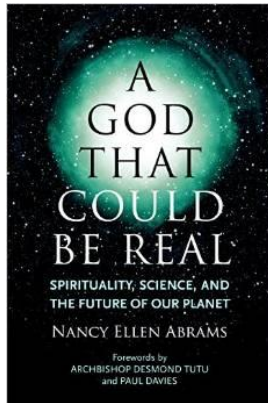


Seeking Real Good



A God That Could Be Real: Spirituality, Science, and the Future of Our Planet

By Nancy Abrams

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Review by: Leland R. Beaumont

This is one of the most intriguing books I have read in some time. It shows us a way forward toward a coherence that transcends the divisive religious doctrines that deny the well-established truths of the universe and the sterile scientific models that ignore or dismiss the power of spirituality.

Throughout history concepts of God have evolved to explain the workings of the universe as it is best understood. Historically theologians did their best to make their image of God consistent with the universe as they understood it to be. Today our understanding of the universe has advanced far beyond what the gods of traditional religions explain. These obsolete gods are holding people back. This book proposes a concept of god that is up-to-date with our present understanding of the universe.

The book emerges from a dilemma faced by the author. Because her husband is Joel Primack, a prominent physicist who studies the origins of the universe, she is conversant with the most up-to-date research describing the origins of the universe and its composition including dark energy and dark matter. Based on her husband's research, she has total confidence in the accuracy of these scientific findings. She lived as an atheist most of her life. However, recently she has been able to recover from an addiction to overeating using the spiritual approach of a twelve-step program. She conceived of the higher power called for in the program as a "loving but unbullshitable witness to my thoughts."

She abandons the tired question "Does God Exist?" as a hopeless distraction and instead pursues the question "Could anything actually exist in the universe, as science understands it, that is worthy of being called God?" The price of a real God is that we have to consciously let go of what makes it unreal.

Rejecting intelligence, tool making, and language as the defining characteristic of humans, she proposes that humans are unique because *we aspire to something more*. After illustrating the concept of emergence she presents the core thesis of the book: *God is endlessly emerging from the staggering complexity of all humanity's aspirations across time*. God is all that drives us forward toward what we can be and what we want to be.

Chapters 4–6 making up part II of the book are somewhat contrived. Here she attempts to accommodate spirituality, prayer, and afterlife within her reality-based concept of God. These ideas are thought-provoking and worthy of more discussion, but not yet settled in my mind.

In Chapter 7 she gives practical suggestions for renewing and reinventing religion. After describing actions to bring religion into harmony with reality, she identifies three sacred goals: 1) to protect our extraordinary jewel of a planet, 2) to do our best for future generations, and 3) to identify with humanity's story.

Chapter 8 outlines a "Planetary Morality." Here she considers the essential question: "How can we individually expand our moral sense to care about our collective effects at size scales and timescales we are just beginning to grasp?" She presents eight high-level principles for good living informed from a global perspective.

This book is both poetic and scientific. Within a rigorous scientific framework she passionately discusses spirituality, prayer, love, identity, common bonds, heaven, and hell. "For the first time we can have a coherent picture of reality that meets our highest scientific standards, reveals unexplored terrain in ourselves, has a meaningful place for an awesome God, and frees our spirits to strike out with fervor—and not a moment too soon."

Read this important and thought-provoking book. It is boldly conceived, well written, clearly argued, and backed by reliable evidence.