

Lens to the Natural World

REFLECTIONS ON DINOSAURS, GALAXIES, AND GOD

KENNETH H. OLSON

Foreword by Jack Horner



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This book straddles the fertile middle ground between science and religion at a time when the conversation is dominated by extremists on both sides. Taking seriously the modern view of the universe, including the fossil record for the history of life across millions of years, the author considers our relationship to the rest of nature. In addition, the age-old questions concerning meaning, values, and our place within it all are perhaps more pressing than ever before. This work provides a broad engagement with major ideas, including evolution and earth stewardship, while drawing upon a rich heritage of philosophy and literature and doing so in a manner accessible to the general reader.

Kenneth H. Olson is a dinosaur hunter who has located numerous specimens including two nine-foot skulls that are among the largest for any land animal ever. A Research Associate in Paleontology for The Museum of the Rockies, Montana State University, Bozeman, he is also an ordained Lutheran pastor, having served congregations for thirty-seven years.

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“Ken Olson has discovered extraordinary specimens of dinosaurs and other prehistoric creatures, many of them on display in our university museum. His profession has been in the realm of religion, but he has combined this with a concern for scientific inquiry. This intriguing blend has never been more needed than today, when too much is seen in terms of simplistic opposites. The reader of this work will find stories of discovery and be challenged by their implications, stirred to deeper reflection about the splendor of life in its long journey through time, and moved to a greater caring for the planet that is our home.”

Jack Horner, Dinosaur paleontologist and Curator, The Museum of the Rockies, Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana

“Take a remarkably successful fossil hunter, a highly literate pastor, an excellent writer, and a passionate naturalist, and combine them into one book, and you have a book you must read. It will delight and educate at the same time. Tired of know-nothing, anti-evolution, anti-global warming religionists? This book will be a breath of fresh air, seamlessly combining serious science with religious insight. Ken Olson—prairie philosopher-scientist from Montana—will reawaken you to the wonders of the natural world.”

Arland Jacobson, Retired Director, CHARIS Ecumenical Center, Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota

“Ken Olson is a person of deep religious conviction who also happens to understand and to work within the scientific paradigm. As such, he is unusually qualified to counsel people of faith who feel uncertain or distrustful of much of science. Ken shows that science is neither monolithic nor anti-religious, but rather a world of wonder that can bring people to a deeper appreciation of both religion and science. We all owe him a debt of gratitude for his insight.”

Kevin Padian, Department of Integrative Biology and Museum of Paleontology, University of California, Berkeley