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Author: Prof. Ray P. Norris

CSIRO Australia Telescope National Facility, Epping, NSW, Australia, ray.norris@csiro.au

GAMMA-RAY BURSTERS AND THE EMERGENCE OF LIFE

Abstract

It is now widely accepted that roughly once every 200 million years, a massive star in our part of the Galaxy undergoes a spectacular death as a Gamma-ray burster, which has the potential of sterilising all life-bearing planets within a few thousand light years. So, we would expect our planet to have been sterilised many times since life first evolved over four billion years ago. Evidently this has not happened. So are we just lucky, in which case the prospects for SETI are bleak, and those for mankind even bleaker? Or are there fundamental flaws in our assumptions about how a gamma-ray burster might affect emergent life?