

Part Five

A Contemporary and Future Sirius

Over the past three and a half centuries Sirius has taught astronomers and physicists many valuable lessons about the stars and the physical universe. All these lessons resulted from difficult observations made with some of the best ground-based telescopes available at the time. In the last fifteen years, however, it has been possible to extend our studies of Sirius and its companion into outer space. With the help of these observations—at new wavelengths and with greater clarity—it is now possible, with some confidence, to describe how the Sirius that we see today, came to be, and what will become of it in the distant future: and how the same physical processes will shape the fate of our sun and the earth.