

Testing cosmology

I would like to comment about the paper by John G. Hartnett, ‘A new cosmology: solution to the starlight travel problem’ (*TJ* 17(2):98–102, 2003).

I appreciate Dr Hartnett’s admittance that his solution ‘has low apologetic value, because in terms of extra-solar system observations it makes no unusual predictions’. Hartnett is correct in that it would be difficult to find scientific evidence either supportive of or contradictory to his theory. However, his theory may suffer from a flaw similar to the theory that God created light from the stars ‘on the way’.

Many people have supported, and still do support, the theory that God created light ‘on the way’ from the stars. This theory is also very difficult to support or contradict from scientific evidence. Hartnett correctly criticizes this theory by stating, ‘I don’t believe that God commits fraud. Creating a beam of light from source to observer so that the observer appears to see current information must also mean there is a whole stream of information in the beam that is false.’ The theory of creating light ‘on the way’ should be rejected because it is not in accord with the nature of God. God is a God of truth, not deceit.

Hartnett’s theory may similarly pose a discrepancy with Scripture. His theory basically puts 12 billion years of ‘astronomical’ time (the time for light to travel from the farthest stars observed today) into three days of the Creation Week on Earth. If that did really happen, then nearby stars (such as Alpha Centauri at 4.3 light years from the earth) could have had 12 billion years of light arriving on the earth during three days of Earth time. That would make nearby stars about 1.46×10^{12} times as bright during Creation Week as they currently are. With these extremely bright stars, the earth would not have had a period of night characterized by darkness during the last three days of Creation Week. This does not fit the creation record.

Hartnett might be able to tweak

his theory to resolve this conflict. However, Christians should have a philosophical conflict with this type of theory. There are two types of theories that endure—ones that are true and ones that cannot be shown to be false.

Evolution is an enduring theory not because it is true but because as long as you accept billions of years of history, evolution is hard to prove false. As Christians, it is imperative that we present true theories which accurately represent God’s creative nature. If the theories we present are not testable, then we could become guilty of presenting a false theory that actually damages God’s glory. Furthermore, an untestable theory will never be accepted by the world, and it may delay the discovery of the true theory that shows God’s glory.

I can understand the urgency to resolve the starlight travel-time issue. However, we do not want to resolve it with just a theory that cannot be shown to be false. We want to resolve it with the true theory. In order to do that, our theories must be based on revealed Scripture and testable science.

Hartnett suggests that ‘There are five possible areas of explanation ... that still maintain the 6 x 24-hour literal days’. I am a software designer, and it seems that every time we say we have five choices it invariably ends up that option six or seven is the best choice.

The last three years I have been studying what Scripture teaches about the ‘heavens’ of Genesis 1:1 and the ‘firmament/expanse’ of verses 6–8. I’m convinced that the physics required to resolve the starlight travel-time is contained in these verses and that there are other options.

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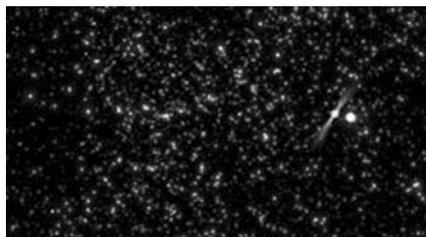


Photo by NASA.

John Hartnett replies:

I don’t think my model is impossible to test—difficult yes, impossible no. I said in the paper:

‘If the special frame was confined to the solar system, we could call it “young”.²¹ If the special frame was confined to the Earth only, we could call the solar system “old”.²² The difference would make the model testable. However, to be self-consistent with other evidence that makes the solar system appear “young”,²³ I would place the boundary of the special frame at least outside the solar system. So then this is consistent with my Young Solar System (YSS) model.⁸ Further investigation is required though to see if this is consistent with other age estimators within our region of space.’

If one could show that solar system objects, including the sun are distinctly young compared to extra-solar system objects, then one has a test. But to reject a model consistent with Scripture because it is difficult to falsify seems premature. Besides no model that is consistent with the Genesis account and its timeframe will ever be accepted by the ‘world’. I believe that we must start with the revealed truth, that starlight is real, carries real information, left its sources 6,000 years ago, and we see it today. Applying deductive reasoning results in the explanation I offer, without resorting to supposing that God deceives us.

What is the similar flaw to the ‘created on the way’ idea for starlight? I see none! With respect to the nearby stars on Day 4 being so bright, if we ignore God’s sustaining power and only consider relativistic arguments, wouldn’t the peak wavelengths also be shifted by 12–13 orders of magnitude towards the shorter wavelengths, if observed in the YSS frame? Hence, no visible light would be seen at all. But there were no observers on Earth on Day 4. So ... not ‘bright’ at all. But during this period of time in the YSS decelerated timeframe, the sun, moon

and planets would be shining but at the normal rate like today. The YSS timeframe only appears to affect the light from the stars on Day 4, when no animal or human life was present. But I am not suggesting God withdrew His sustaining power, but maintained the creation supernaturally during Creation Week, even suspending some of the laws of physics to do it. Also, since we can imagine in my model that God created the stars and galaxies during the period of time on Day 4, which, in *astronomical* time, took 'millions and billions of years', then Alpha Centauri may have been created towards the end of Day 4, and not undergone 12 billion years of aging in *astronomical* time. No tweaking of the model is needed.

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