

## Maintaining respect for biblical teaching

With particular reference to Justin K. Taylor's paper 'The speed of matter', *Journal of Creation* 19(3), but also such an approach generally, it is of most serious concern that the possibility of mature creation is so readily and derisively dismissed from the field of astronomy, and a word of caution is surely warranted.

Taylor asserts that the mature creation of interacting galaxies and galaxies with wakes or jets, etc., would constitute 'a false impression of great age' being given, and that 'most creation scientists working in the field of astronomy would agree that the starlight-created-in-transit concept makes God out to be a deceiver.'

But using such terms as 'false impression' or 'deceiver' in this context really is inadvisable, because, regardless of whether Taylor and most creation scientists in astronomy think mature creation might or might not be applicable to their field of interest, nevertheless mature creation is a fact of biblical doctrine. Adam was created a mature man, Eve a mature woman, also the grass, herb and fruit tree, the great whales, the winged fowl, the cattle were all created in their mature state. Yet there are no grounds for suggesting that Adam and Eve were under any false impression or were deceived because of this. And it is quite simply wholly inappropriate to assert that mature creation implies any falsity or deception, because it would certainly be blasphemous to attribute any such activity to God.

Taylor suggests that pointing to mature creation with regards the subject he discusses is 'more a dismissal than an explanation', but perhaps he actually too readily dismisses the implications of biblical instruction. For pointing to mature creation is no more a dismissal regarding galaxies than it is concerning man and his earthly domain, and it denigrates the biblical doctrine to suggest that mature creation misleads

and that it does not offer as complete, reliable and satisfactory an explanation of the origin of what is out in the cosmos as it does of what is round about us here.

Why does Taylor feel he should be able to offer a purely scientific explanation for the apparent age of, for example, colliding galaxies, when he would not dream of trying to do so for the wine provided miraculously by the Lord at Cana? Could Taylor have told us how long the wine had taken to mature? From which variety of grape it had been made? Or would he have been able to tell us how old Adam was by looking at him, this mature man, on the seventh day?

The principle applied by Taylor, and others who may share his views, is that one would necessarily have had to conclude by looking at Adam that he had been alive for i.e. some thirty years, and that the wine at Cana could not have been made a few moments previously. In these instances scientific principle would have misled terribly. A fact which many scientists ensnared in

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the pride of man's philosophy simply cannot countenance.

And indeed I suggest that even creation scientists, by dint of the required methodology of scientific research, can sometimes be susceptible to the conceit of the wisdom of man. Not that the brave efforts and marvellous achievements of creation scientists in recent years are to be derided, certainly not, but neither is caution to be neglected by them. Few or none earnestly interested in creation science would not agree that Christian truth transcends science, and Mr Taylor himself raises the question

of where to draw the line. But that line is not ours to draw. It has been drawn by the Maker of all things. We either recognise it or fail to do so. And as the Holy Bible has ample testimony to mature creation it is surely unwise to so readily dismiss it from the field of astronomy just because of man's scientific observations. Biblical teaching makes clear that there is far more to understanding the cosmos than meets the eye.

Even if Taylor, as also others pursuing scientific explanations, might dispute the pertinence of the doctrine of mature creation to the field of astronomy, it is nevertheless the case that, in view of the fact that mature creation is certainly part of the teaching of the Holy Bible, a cautionary note is undoubtedly in order, for it cannot be consistent with a Christian approach to either describe mature creation as deceptive or to dismiss it as inadequate.

Unfortunately, Taylor misapplies Proverbs 25:2, suggesting it is pertinent to man's seeking to scientifically understand the universe, and from this misapplication deduces that man may indeed expect to be able to thus understand the universe, by which he implicitly means in context that man may understand the creative work of God, and from this deduction he concludes that mature creation must be inadequate as an explanation of galactic origins, because, as he puts it, it would give 'a false impression' to man.

But the idea that man can understand the creative work of God is incorrect and is a false premise upon which to build arguments evaluating scientific observations. The creative work of the Creator is by definition beyond the comprehension of the creature. This is certainly the teaching of the Holy Bible.

Be it, as Taylor puts it, 'jets of matter leading into lobes they did not produce', or be it wine full of flavour from no grapes and no fermentation, the point is that time is not necessary

for something to have the qualities of time and process when God commands a thing to be.

And so consequently, these points having been made, another reason Taylor and others should not so readily dismiss the pertinence of the doctrine of mature creation in regard to all astronomical phenomena is that it offers the prospect of a complete, reliable and wholly satisfactory explanation for the origins of them all—a point which can be of no little interest to the scientific mind.

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### Justin Taylor replies:

I thank Dominic Murphy for his contribution to this discussion and for some insightful comments. There are several points I would like to make.

First, Murphy states: ‘mature creation is a fact of biblical doctrine. Adam was created a mature man, Eve a mature woman, also the grass, herb and fruit tree ... were all created in their mature state’. But how do we know this? In fact, the Bible never explicitly states that Adam was an adult at the time of creation. We make this assumption since all other possibilities seem patently absurd. But we cannot necessarily extend this line of reasoning to situations where mature creation is *not* needed.

It is always possible that an object of scientific study was created instantaneously in a mature state. But when we have no specific biblical information, and when there is no *necessity* for mature creation, a good rule of thumb is to assume natural causes. For example, there is specific biblical support for the notion that Earth was created supernaturally. On the other hand, there is no reason to assume that the rock layers were created as they are today, complete with fossils. Thus we search for natural causes. So far, this assumption has led to many flourishing scientific fields, and a greater understanding of the created world.

Second, God could in fact have created galaxies in absolutely any way, young or mature. But we would not expect to see characteristic signs of natural processes where only God’s hand had been at work. As my article tried to demonstrate (very briefly), galaxies do show many signs of natural forces at work over long periods of time.

Third, I have argued that God probably would not have created galaxies with an apparent history of interaction. But suppose that He did. Some have previously suggested that stellar evolution or nuclear decay may have been accelerated during Creation Week. Perhaps galaxy interactions were accelerated as well. In that case, we could see billions of year’s worth of natural processes occurring in only a few days. There are many ways God could have created, and as Murphy points out, we really cannot determine with certainty which one is correct. Supernatural creation simply is not within the realm of scientific inquiry.

Finally, Murphy makes one very important observation: ‘even creation scientists, by dint of the required methodology of scientific research, can sometimes be susceptible to the conceit of the wisdom of man’. Indeed, this is probably one reason that most scientists are evolutionists: it is unsettling for a scientist to admit the possibility of something beyond the scope of science.

But we must also avoid the opposite error of abandoning science too easily when we are, in fact, still within its realm. Most phenomena that we observe are natural, and the required methodology that Murphy speaks of has proven very useful in understanding the universe. The data presented in my article, and much more available in the astronomical literature, suggests that natural science can also be useful in understanding the structure and history of galaxies.

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