

CHAPTER 7

AN ANCIENT AND DYNAMIC UNIVERSE

A DETAILED FALSE HISTORY?

If there were just one or two pieces of evidence for an old universe, it might be possible to explain it with another model. However, there is a wide variety and great detail of evidence for an old universe obtained from many independent techniques and a wide variety of astronomical objects, from nearby asteroids to star clusters to the most distant galaxies. This wealth of data challenges the Appearance of Age Interpretation of Genesis 1 (see chapter 5 of *Origins: A Reformed Look at Creation, Origin, and Evolution*).

Of course, no amount of scientific evidence can completely disprove this interpretation.

God could have created the universe 10,000 years ago but made it look old to all of our scientific instruments. God could have created the universe ten years ago, with all our memories in place and old-looking buildings in our cities. But we wouldn't expect the God who is revealed in the Bible to act this way. The evidence of great age coming to us from the universe is as varied and detailed as the evidence of age coming to us from our memories and the buildings around us. Every star cluster whose age has been measured is found to be at least millions of years old. Every galaxy that has been observed is much farther than 10,000 light years away. If God created those galaxies 10,000 years ago, we wouldn't be able to see them unless God also created the light waves already traveling to earth.

When we examine the light from stars and galaxies with telescopes and spectrometers, that light tells the whole dynamic life story of these objects. The story includes dramatic changes like supernova explosions located 200,000 light years from earth. (See related article "The Life Cycle of Stars" on this website.) Scientists have seen many supernova in galaxies located millions of light-years away, supernova whose bursts of light have only recently arrived at Earth. One particular supernova named SN1987A occurred in a galaxy 200,000 light-years away and was first detected in 1987. In the years following the initial burst of light, scientists monitored a shock front of energy as it expanded outward from the exploding star, lighting up the surrounding gas and dust like searchlight beams in fog.

Ten thousand years ago, God could have created the light waves from SN1987A, already traveling to Earth with a burst of light timed to reach Earth in 1987. But then God also would have had to embed a richly detailed story in that light burst, telling how the shock front expanded outward from the exploding star and how the amount of light it produced decreased during the subsequent months exactly in accordance with the astronomers' models of how supernova should behave. If that light burst was created 10,000 years ago traveling towards Earth, all of the richly detailed story built into it would have never actually happened. The Appearance of Age

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Interpretation of Genesis implies that God asks us to believe that the history of the universe—history written in the light traveling to us from distant stars and galaxies and written in the orbits and the rocks of nearby planets and asteroids—is an elaborate fiction.