

RATE Project Turns to Deception
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First Published 9 October 2004
Answers In Creation Website
www.answersincreation.org/ratedeception.htm

If you follow young earth creationist research, you are sure to have heard of the RATE Project, which stands for Radioisotopes and the Age of the Earth). It is a cooperative project of the Institute for Creation Research (ICR) and the Creation Research Society (CRS). So far, they claim they are making excellent progress in their studies, however, as you shall see, they have to turn to deception in order to provide evidence for a young earth.

Case #1

They claim to have accomplished important work in the field of radioisotope dating (see RATE group reveals exciting breakthroughs!).¹ However, when one looks at their claim in the second paragraph of this article, it says "with the release of several key peer-reviewed papers at the recent ICC (International Conference on Creationism), it is clear that RATE has made some fantastic progress, with real breakthroughs in this area."

Peer-review is critical for scientific research to be taken seriously (for a description of how peer-review works, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peer_review). Basically, several other scientists who are experts in the field examine your work to see if it contains errors. Occasionally you will see young-earth claims of their work being peer-reviewed, such as in the article above. However, for young-earth work to be taken seriously, it must pass the muster of peer-review from non young-earth scientists. If you look at the three articles referenced in the article, there are no claims as to who did the peer-review.

Normally, a peer-reviewed article which passes muster would be published in a leading journal such as from the Geological Society of America, however, as you can see, these three so-called peer-reviewed articles only appear on the ICR website. If the RATE project truly publishes some work which is good enough for publication in secular journals, then they would surely pursue that route. It is clear in this case that the "peers" for these articles are other young-earth proponents, which cast serious doubts upon the validity of the works.

Case #2

In the October 2004 issue of Acts and Facts from ICR, one of the headlines reads "Radioisotope Dating of Grand Canyon Rocks: Another Devastating Failure for Long-Age Geology".² The methods used by the RATE theorists in this research need to be questioned.

The key paragraph is the second one. The first sentence says "Metamorphic rocks are not always easy to date using radioisotopes." The rock formation in question for this

article is the Brahma Schist. Later in the same paragraph, they say "In Grand Canyon, the "date" of metamorphism of the basalt lavas to form these Brahma amphibolites has been determined as 1690-1710 Ma (million years ago), based on U-Pb dating of minerals in the overlying Vishnu Schist and underlying Rama Schist that formed during the metamorphism."

The first thing that immediately came to mind is...the dates for the Brahma come from the overlying and underlying formations because the dates for the Brahma formation are unreliable...after all, metamorphic rocks are not easy to date. So, what do the RATE folks do...they take 27 samples from a formation that they know in advance will give them bad dates. What better way to prove their point, by selectively choosing a formation that is known to provide bad dates. In effect, they are "stacking the deck" in their favor.

One of the references the authors use is to a Geological Society of America Bulletin (http://www.denison.edu/geology/pdf/llg_et_al96.pdf). This article gives definitive dates for the Brahma Schist, with no hint of any bad dates. Then I thought, 'Why is it that when secular or old-earth scientists date rocks, they provide consistent dates, but when young-earth theorists date rocks, they provide widely varying results, which cast doubt upon the reliability of radiometric dating?'

There are two possible explanations for this apparent dilemma. First, the GSA article does not directly talk about the dating methods, they merely give the dates. We don't know what the actual dating results were (i.e. how many samples, the yield for all of them). We do know that the dates are given without any supporting remarks...in other words, there was no reason to doubt the dates, or to discuss them further. It can be inferred that the dates in question were consistent with each other. If these dates were consistent, then the dating methods of the young earth RATE group when they tested their 27 samples are suspect...did they handle the rocks properly...did they send them to laboratories that are run by other young-earth theorists. One can only imagine that there was some problem with the rock samples or the lab tests.

The other possibility is that the young earth theorists are right, that the dates for the Brahma come from the overlying and underlying rocks, because the dates for the Brahma are considered unreliable. In this case, the GSA article gets their dates from the overlying and underlying rocks (the article does not say). If this is the case, the scientist writing the GSA article knew he could not trust the Brahma dates, so they relied upon the dates from the other layers. The RATE theorists, knowing in advance that they could not get reliable dates from the Brahma, chose to take samples from there anyway. If this is the case, the RATE theorists were trying to stack the deck in their favor by selectively choosing a project that they knew in advance would demonstrate a discrepancy.

Conclusion

Scientists know the inherent problems in dating metamorphic rocks. So do the young earth theorists. In either one of these two possibilities listed above, the young-earth position is questionable. Either the RATE people had bad sampling and bad lab work, or they stacked the deck in advance.

Both old-earth creationists and young earth creationists know the problems with metamorphic rocks. The old-earth scientists look for other reliable methods, such as dating the layers above and below, taking hundreds of samples, comparing the layer's position within the geologic column, etc., while the young earthers focus on the faulty metamorphic methods. It is a case of one group of scientists looking for valid dating techniques, and another group complaining about the problems associated with dating. As you can see, one side can be called optimists (old earth), and the other pessimists (young earth).

If you understand radiometric dating, and know its limitations, it proves to be a very useful tool. Young earth theorists will call attention to apparent problems they find with dating, and yes, there are problems out there, but the results of radiometric dating are consistent enough to be trusted. Overall, radiometric dating is accurate and useful in dating rocks which are millions of years old.

For another article on RATE, see RATE Project - The Truth (www.answersincreation.org/rate.htm)

¹ answersingenesis.org/docs2003/0821rate.asp

² icr.org/index.php?module=articles&action=view&ID=42