

THE DATING GAME

THE dates assigned to rocks are not questioned by most people, who believe that scientists have ‘proved’ that the earth is many millions of years old. These vast ages are mainly obtained through radio-metric dating techniques. Are these methods accurate, and are scientists justified in trusting the results of such dating? The answer may surprise many people. Before discussing the methods themselves, we must first mention their limitations. Generally speaking, radio-metric dating cannot be applied to sedimentary rocks where the majority of fossils are found. Only volcanic rocks can be dated in this way. Therefore, dates assigned to fossils are usually arrived at some other way.¹

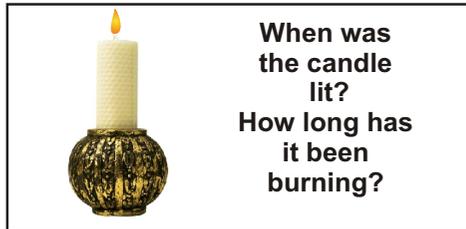
THE PRINCIPLE

The principle behind radio-metric dating is the measurement of the decay of radio-active isotopes (the ‘parent’) into a non-radio-active (‘daughter’) element. By measuring the amount of each present in a rock sample, and the rate of decay, it is claimed that a rock can be accurately dated. This all sounds good in theory, but in practice there are serious problems. The whole method relies upon at least three assumptions.

THE ASSUMPTIONS

They are (1) that the initial conditions are known, i.e. No ‘daughter’ isotopes present when the rock solidified, (2) that the rock has remained a ‘closed system’, with no parent or daughter isotopes being added or removed from the specimen, and (3) that the decay rate has remained constant. Unless observers were present when the rock solidified, and were able to continually observe what happened to the rock throughout its history, it is clear that each of these assumptions is unprovable.

We can use a burning candle as a simple illustration. If you walked into a room and found a

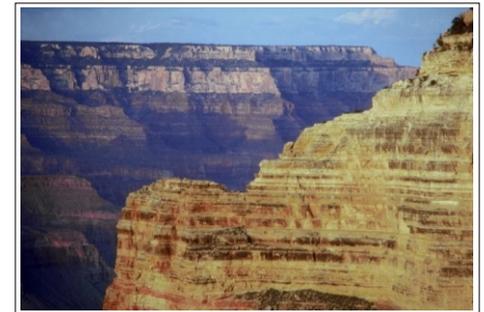


burning candle, how could you find out how long it had been burning? To answer you would need to know (1) the initial conditions, i.e. original length of the candle, (2) whether it had been burning continuously, or been extinguished and re-lit, and (3) whether it had been burning at the same rate, e.g. no draughts to speed up the process. Unless you could talk to the person who lit the candle, and ascertain that it had been burning constantly, you could not answer the question. You could, of course, *guess* the original length of the candle, and *assume* that it had been burning at a constant rate. You could then *estimate* how long it had been burning, but your estimate could well be very wrong.

LIABLE TO ERROR

The radio-metric dating of rocks is just as uncertain and liable to error. There is no way of knowing the initial condition of a rock sample, or of proving that the current rate of decay, observed over a relatively short time, has been the same throughout periods which are often measured in millions of years. Geologist Dr Andrew Snelling has written: ‘80 or 90 years of measurements are being extrapolated backwards in time to the origin of the earth, believed by evolutionists to be 4.5 billion years ago. This is an enormous extrapolation. In any other field of scientific research, if scientists or mathematicians were to extrapolate results over that many orders of magnitude, thereby assuming continuity of results

over such enormous spans of unobserved time, they would be literally “laughed out of court” by fellow scientists and mathematicians. Yet geochronologists are allowed to do this with impunity, primarily because it gives the desired millions and billions of years that evolutionists require, and because it makes these radioactive “clocks” work!’² The assumption that the rock has remained a ‘closed system’ is certainly wrong. The United States Geological Survey observed: ‘As much as 90% of the total radioactive elements of some granites could be removed by leaching the granulated rock with weak acid... as much as 40% of the uranium in most fresh-appearing igneous rocks is readily leachable.’³



THE GRAND CANYON

methods which produce such unreliable results.

CONFLICT

There have been many cases of conflicting results where radiometric dating has been used. Sometimes, different dates have been obtained from the *same* rock sample. In the famous Grand Canyon, Arizona, the deeply buried Carnenas (Precambrian) basalt was dated using four different methods, and produced 13 different ages, ranging from 715 million years to 1070 million years! In addition, lava flows from the Canyon rim were dated using the same methods, and produced ages ranging from 0.01 million years to 2600 million years!⁴ Note that the last figure is more than twice that of the highest result from the deeply buried basalts, yet these are the youngest rocks. In another instance, a meteorite called *Allende* produced ages ranging from 4.5 to 10.5 billion years.⁵ The latter is more than twice the supposed age of the solar system!

Another serious problem with radiometric dating is the fact that when it is applied to rocks of a *known* age, it is always wrong. Here are three examples: Hawaiian lavas, which erupted in 1800-1801 showed ages of from 140 million to 2.96 billion years.⁶ At the Mt. Ngauruhoe volcano, New Zealand, lavas which flowed in 1954 produced ‘ages’ of between 0.8 and 3.5 million years. Lava from the dome of the Mt St Helens volcano in Washington State, USA, which erupted in 1986, produced a date of 0.35 million years.⁶ There is clearly something very wrong with

PRECONCEIVED

The most serious objection of all is that the results of radiometric dating are always rejected if they do not fit preconceived ideas of the rock’s age. When a rock sample is sent for dating, geochronologists always want to know where the rock was found. So, in a sense, they already ‘know’ roughly how old it ought to be, and if the final result does not fit the expected age, it is rejected. Richard L Mauger Ph.D., Associate Professor of Geology at East Carolina University, wrote: ‘In general, dates in the correct “ball park” are assumed to be correct and are published, but those in disagreement with other data are seldom published nor are discrepancies fully explained.’⁷

ONE WHO WAS THERE!

We conclude that there is no scientific proof that the earth is millions or billions of years old. However, the One who was present in the beginning — the very Creator Himself — has left us a record in the Bible. Read in a straightforward way, the Bible clearly implies that the earth is 6,000 — 10,000 years old. This stands in stark contrast to the 4.5 billion years commonly quoted by evolutionists. But let us remember that God was there ‘when the candle was lit’, and remind ourselves of the question He once asked a man called Job: ‘Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundations?’ (*Job 38: 4*)

REFERENCES:

1. See ‘How Old are Fossils?’ CR T Factsheet no 46.
2. ‘Radioactive Dating Method Under Fire’, *Creation Ex Nihilo*, 14: 2, 1992, p.44.
3. *US Geological Survey Bulletin No 1046-F* (1997), p. 93.
4. For full details, see *The Young Earth* by Dr John Morris, Master Books (1998) pp. 58–61.
5. *Journal of Geophysical Research*, 73: 14, July 1968, pp. 4601–4607.
6. Dr A Snelling, ‘Radioactive Dating Failure’, *Creation* 22: 1, Dec 1999–Feb. 2000, p. 20.
7. *Contributions to Geology, University of Wyoming*, 15: 1 (1977) p. 37.

