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THE AGE OF THE WORLD:  
BEYOND REASONABLE DOUBT

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The present paper will discuss three approaches to issues of doubt and their relation to the question of the world's age. The first two approaches are methods of inquiry: the scientific method, and the exercise of judgment. The third approach is not a method of inquiry, but rather a procedure of organizing known facts into an a priori or given framework. One may refer to this third approach as the partisan procedure. That each of the three approaches has legitimate applications is acknowledged, but most people are not aware that with regard to the issue of cosmos antiquity, evolutionists have been conferred the mantle and authority of the scientific method when, in fact, they have operated as committed partisans. Neither the scientific method nor the partisan approach, however, is appropriate for inquiry into the age of the cosmos. The partisan procedure is not appropriate because it is not a method of inquiry, and the scientific method is not appropriate because the issue of the world's age is a historical rather than a scientific question. The proper approach for inquiry into the when of creation is the exercise of judgment in which evidence on alternative sides of an issue is weighed. When this approach is taken with regard to the question of cosmic antiquity, it is the contention of recent-creationists that the straightforward Genesis record is more plausible than the evolution alternative involving vast spans of time.

THE PROOF OF THE PUDDING IS IN THE EATING: SCIENTIFIC METHOD

The age of the universe is not an issue directly subject to the scientific method. The importance of this point is that the question of the universe's age is never going to be scientifically proven by some crucial experiment in the way, for example, that the atomic bomb "proves"  $E = mc^2$ . In order to see why the age question is not subject to such proof, it is necessary to define the scientific method and its proper domain. The scientific method involves a cycle of activities including observation, hypothesis formulation, experimentation and theory construction.(1) The domain of application for the scientific method can be remembered by the mnemonic phrase, "OR Totally Fallible." The key letters O,R,T,F stand for observable, repeatable, testable, and falsifiable.(2) (3) In the context of the issue of the world's age, one would say that the question of the world's antiquity is not amenable to the scientific method because:

1. No human observer was there to observe the beginning and keep a time record to the present (certainly true from the evolutionist perspective though somewhat less so from the biblical perspective).
2. The creation and subsequent historical unfolding is a one-time event and cannot be repeated to verify the reliability of chronological observations. In the present physical world, which constitutes the domain of the scientific method, it is always possible to gather more data. In principle, this is not the case with historical events. There comes a point where all the existing data have been examined, and there is no way to eliminate interpretations which fit all the data but are nevertheless false.
3. Historical events cannot be summoned up and submitted to experimental testing. Scientists cannot test to see what the universe would look like if it really were 15 billion years old, six thousand years old, and so forth. Scientific theories relate to phenomena in the present that can be empirically tested. Often there are perfectly logical interpretations which nevertheless are refuted when checked out by an experimental test. Such tests cannot be conducted on historical events to rule out perfectly logical conclusions which fit all available data but are nevertheless false.

4. Neither evolutionists nor creationists can specify scientifically derived empirical observations that would falsify their beliefs regarding the age of things. In instances where embarrassing findings occur, it is possible to construct a rationale to get the preferred origins framework "off the hook." Evolutionists Paul Ehrlich and L. C. Birch, for example, have stated that "Our theory of evolution has become...one which cannot be refuted by any possible observations. It is thus 'outside of empirical science,' but not necessarily false." (4)

In the narrow "ORTF window" where the scientific method applies, the scientist can speak with great authority. What are called the miracles of modern science--atomic bombs, wonder drugs, computers, air conditioners, airplanes, etc.--all share the common feature of dealing with phenomena that fit into this narrow window. In the scientific domain, the operative phrase is, "The proof of the pudding is in the eating." For example, anyone who denies the reality of human flight can simply be taken to an airport and shown empirically that airplanes fly. Similarly, to test our theories of atomic physics, we can build a bomb based upon principles derived from those theories and see if it explodes. Ignoring expert warnings on topics within the narrow window of the scientific domain can be disastrous. One quite prudently heeds, for example, warnings not to take plugged-in radios or hairdryers into the bathtub. The point of it all is that we are not going to wake up some morning and find that the age of the cosmos has been scientifically proven.

#### THE PREPONDERANCE OF EVIDENCE: EXERCISE OF JUDGMENT

Outside the ORTF window constituting the domain of the scientific method, one must utilize a different approach in which there is no recourse beyond the exercise of judgment. The inquiry becomes strictly a judicial matter because it involves reasoning and weighing of evidence pertaining to a particular hypothesis rather than the direct, empirical testing which typifies the scientific method. One of the principal applications of this approach is to explore historical questions. The question of whether Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in the assassination of John F. Kennedy, for instance, would be historical and one would have to weigh evidence and exercise judgment to try to answer it. The scientific method doesn't apply, because one cannot go back in time to observe, repeat and test the assassination event. There is, of course, evidence which still exists in the present that can be tested scientifically, but this evidence, existing in the present--bullet casings, lab reports, etc.--is distinct from the event itself. For instance, if a high level, carefully orchestrated conspiracy were involved in the killing, the evidence might have been carefully tampered with to make it appear that a lone madman was responsible. The historical actions that produced the evidence--which exists in the present--cannot be repeated and tested, and therefore one is back to the exercise of judgment.

Fair and proper judgment involves a weighing of evidence on opposing sides of an issue. The most common example is the jury trial. The question of guilt or innocence is weighed by a carefully selected jury. The prosecutor takes the evidence--which exists in the present--and builds a case upon that evidence to make the defendant appear guilty. The defense attorney, on the other hand, takes the same evidence--which exists in the present--and builds a case upon that evidence to make the defendant appear innocent. The jury then weighs the opposing arguments and arrives at a decision as to guilt or innocence. The verdict is not certain, and it cannot be submitted to the narrow ORTF window of the scientific test for empirical verification. As is well known, miscarriages of justice frequently occur.

Where the scientific method applies one can say, "The proof of the pudding is in the eating," but with mere judgment one is limited to more equivocal statements such as, "beyond a reasonable doubt," or "the preponderance of evidence."

#### LET THE BUYER BEWARE: PARTISAN PROMOTION

The third approach to questions at issue is not a method of inquiry at all. This approach may be called partisan promotion, and with it the conclusion is determined in advance. The most common example would be commercial advertising where economic considerations take precedence over data and evidence pertaining to the relative merits of a product. There are admittedly cases where the partisan's prior convictions are justified, but regardless of justifiability the partisan's efforts are not directed at inquiry but rather persuasion and promotion. The partisan's audience only hears one side of the story. If that audience is interested in inquiry, but not in a position to test scientifically the partisan's claims, there will have to be a recourse to judgment and weighing of evidence by seeking out opposing views and possibilities. Where the scientific method applies one may speak of the "proof of the pudding is in the eating" and with the exercise of judgment, the "preponderance of evidence," but with the partisan procedure the watchword is, "Let the buyer beware."

## THE AGE OF THE COSMOS?

The purpose of this paper has been to explain that, first, the question of the world's age is not one that can be put to scientific test. There is no pudding in which to find the proof. Secondly, the information currently available in secular textbooks, popular magazines and media is not adequate for public inquiry into the question of whether the origin of the universe is recent or ancient. Currently available material is simply partisan promotion of the evolutionist and materialist scenario of cosmic origins and development. A fair inquiry into the when of creation requires an additional weighing of arguments put forward by scientists and scholars operating from a biblical, recent-creation framework. The current conference is dedicated to laying groundwork for providing such public access to the case for recent-creation. After more than a hundred years of partisan attacks upon the integrity of the biblical record of origins and early earth history, there finally exists an adequate body of documented evidence to allow a fair inquiry into the issue. The prosecutors of the Bible's integrity have presented their case. Now is the time to let the defense speak. Recent-creationists, being aware of the arguments on both sides of the question, are confident that the Genesis record and its implications of recent-creation will win out, not only by the preponderance of evidence, but beyond a reasonable doubt.

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