Date: Friday, March 9, 2007

I am pleased to state that as a result of several e-mail exchanges I have had with Dr. Andrey Feuerverger over the past few days, and a phone conversation with him this morning which confirmed our informal understanding reached by e-mail yesterday, he has agreed that the following two statements made on Discovery Channel's website:

> 1. "A statistical study commissioned by the broadcasters (Discovery Channel/Vision Canada/C4 UK) concludes that the probability factor is 600 to 1 in favor of this tomb being the tomb of Jesus of Nazareth and his family."
>
> (from http://dsc.discovery.com/convergence/tomb/about/about.html)
>
> 2. Dr. Andrey Feuerverger, professor of statistics & mathematics at the University of Toronto, has concluded a high statistical probability that The Talpiot tomb is the **JESUS FAMILY TOMB**. In a study, Feuerverger examined the cluster of names in the tomb **……**
>
> Taking into account the chances that these names would be clustered together in a family tomb, this statistical study concludes that the odds – on the most conservative basis – are **600 to 1 in favor of this being the JESUS FAMILY TOMB**. A statistical probability of 600 to 1 means that this conclusion works 599 times out of 600.
>
> (from *http://dsc.discovery.com/convergence/tomb/explore/media/tomb_evidence.pdf*)

ARE **NOT** A CORRECT INTERPRETATION OF HIS STATISTICAL COMPUTATIONS. He has also confirmed for me that, at his urging, Discovery Channel has agreed to "*undertake the required updates to their website*". As evidence of this, I have appended at the end of this message the relevant portions of the last few emails I exchanged with Dr. Feuerverger.

Dr. Feuerverger indicates that an accurate interpretation of his results are to be found at his recently updated "***Tomb Computation***" link on his University of Toronto website. Please note the following excerpts from that website:

A. *It is not in the purview of statistics to conclude whether or not this tomb site is that of the New Testament family. Any such conclusion much more rightfully belongs to the purview of biblical historical scholars who are in a much better position to assess the assumptions entering into the computations.*

B. *The role of statistics here is primarily to attempt to assess the odds of an equally (or more) `compelling' cluster of names arising purely by chance under certain random sampling assumptions and under certain historical assumptions In this respect I now believe that I should not assert any conclusions connecting this tomb with any hypothetical one of the NT family.*

C. ***The computations do not take into account families who could not afford ossuary burials or who did not have sufficient literacy to have their ossuaries inscribed, and does not take into account families living outside of the Jerusalem area.***

I wish to thank Dr. Feuerverger immensely for his efforts to ensure that the viewing public receives the honest and truthful reporting they are entitled to! I also hope and trust that Discovery Channel will follow suit and retract these inaccuracies quickly.

As I have stated before, my efforts were never aimed at defending Christianity, because I truly believe that all religions must and will eventually reconcile themselves with science and our God-given reason. It is not Christianity that is at stake here but the honest and enlightened use, application, and interpretation of science and reason. Discovery Channel's unqualified assertions that the 600:1 odds are specifically associated with the tomb in question being that of the New Testament Jesus family are, in my opinion, untenable and inaccurate in light of the clarifications on Dr. Feuerverger's website.

Date: Fri, 9 Mar 2007 16:08:47 -0500 (EST)
From: Andrey Feuerverger <andrey@utstat.toronto.edu>
To: joedmello@yahoo.com

i wanted to mention that thanks to your having pointed it out to me
i have managed to get discovery to undertake the required updates
to their website.

best
andrey f.
………..

Date: Thu, 8 Mar 2007 20:56:59 -0800 (PST)
From: Joe D'Mello <joedmello@yahoo.com>
Subject: Re: Discovery Channel Reference to "Dr. Feuerverger's Study"
To: Andrey Feuerverger <andrey@utstat.toronto.edu>

Great, Andrey! …..By the way, while you at it, kindly also make sure that the following statement at http://dsc.discovery.com/convergence/tomb/about/about.html on Discovery's site

"A statistical study commissioned by the broadcasters (Discovery Channel/Vision Canada/C4 UK) concludes that the probability factor is 600 to 1 in favor of this tomb being the tomb of Jesus of Nazareth and his family."

is reworded to appropriately reflect your statistical findings.

I'll call you tomorrow.

 Joe

Andrey Feuerverger <andrey@utstat.toronto.edu> wrote:

Date: Thu, 8 Mar 2007 20:23:49 -0500 (EST)
From: Andrey Feuerverger <andrey@utstat.toronto.edu>
To: joedmello@yahoo.com
Subject: Re: Discovery Channel Reference to "Dr. Feuerverger's Study"

hi joe

you are right about the mismatch between the two sites and thanks for
pointing it out. i will get on this right away.

best
andrey

 Date: Thu, 8 Mar 2007 17:00:24 -0800 (PST)
From: "Joe D'Mello"
Subject: Discovery Channel Reference to "Dr. Feuerverger's Study"
To: Andrey Feuerverger

Hi Andrey,

I'll talk to you tomorrow. I'm sure you have read this already, but just in case you have
not, I've appended below (verbatim) the reference to you and your work on Discovery
Channel's website (which, of course, is clearly not consistent with your assertions in
"The Tomb Computation" on your website).

……

Joe

STATISTICS OVERVIEW

Dr. Andrey feuerverger, professor of statistics & mathematics at the University of
toronto, has concluded a high statistical probability that The talpiot tomb is the JESUS
FAMILY TOMB. In a study, Feuerverger examined the cluster of names in the tomb.

• This involved multiplying the instances that each name appeared during that
time period with the instances of every other name.
• To be conservative, he then divided the number by the statistical standard of 4
(or 25%) to allow for unintentional biases in the historical sources.
• He then further divided the results by 1,000 to account for all tombs that may
have existed in First Century Jerusalem.

Taking into account the chances that these names would be clustered together in a
family tomb, this statistical study concludes that the odds – on the most conservative
basis – are 600 to 1 in favor of this being the JESUS FAMILY TOMB. A statistical
probability of 600 to 1 means that this conclusion works 599 times out of 600.

STATISTICS TABLE

FREQUENCY OF NAMES
INITIAL COMPUTATION
SECOND COMPUTATION (Eliminating Matia since he is not explicatively mentioned in the Gospels)
THIRD COMPUTATION (Adjusting for unintentional biases in the historical sources)
2,400,000 ÷ 4
FOURTH COMPUTATION (Adjust for all possible First Century Jerusalem Tombs)
600,000 ÷ 1,000
PROBABILITY FACTOR = 600 to 1
Jesus Son of Joseph Mariamne Matia Yose Maria
1 in 190 1 in 160 1 in 40 1 in 20 1 in 4
Jesus Son of Joseph Mariamne Matia Yose Maria
1/190 1/160 1/40 1/20 1/4
Jesus Son of Joseph Mariamne Yose Maria
1/190 x 1/160 x 1/20 x 1/4 = 1/2,400,000
x x x x
= 600,000