

other 60 years old. This will probably be a fairly accurate count, but when a trained forester--Christian or non-Christian--approaches the stumps and makes the count, he knows how to recognize and include the very thin rings which were formed during extremely dry seasons. As a result, the trained forester may get more accurate counts of perhaps 42 and 65 years, and we must recognize his superior ability in this type of research. Similarly, a non-Christian, trained geologist can recognize, describe, and understand a given series of sedimentary strata far more accurately than a Christian, non-trained layman can.<sup>4</sup>

### The Stability of Natural Laws

Another of the reasons why we can be confident that science is useful and reliable in the study of nature is that the natural laws which science investigates have a stability which is ordered by God. For example, we know that oxygen is required for the chemical conversion of carbohydrates to produce energy in animals and in the higher plants. Because of the principle of the stability of natural law, we have no ground for suggesting that this may not have been true in the past, or may cease to be true at any time.

There are at least two kinds of teaching in the Bible which enable the Christian to know that nature is dependable and knowable. The first of these is the fact of God's unchangeableness (often referred to as his immutability). We read in Malachi 3:6, "I, the Lord, do not change,"; and in Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever." Also, Psalm 102:27 expresses the same idea. God is not in any sense erratic or fickle as the heathen gods of tradition were. Both the living and non-living realms of the earth are controlled by a large number of natural laws which God established in the beginning. He created these laws as working principles which function in harmony with each other. The wisdom of God was such that He made this a perfect system at the beginning, with the laws functioning correctly in relation to each other. He surely has had no reason to be changing these laws since that time; and furthermore, his absolute power and authority in the universe are sufficient to keep all natural laws intact. We know the latter specifically from Hebrews 1:3, which says that Christ "upholds all things by the word of His power." (Compare Colossians 1:17.)

To illustrate how important it has been, and is, that all the natural laws be kept intact, let us consider again the law of the oxygen requirement mentioned above. The oxygen which enters a marine animal, such as a clam, enters by a process of diffusion. The diffusion process, in turn, operates by the natural laws which govern the movement of molecules through the water and through the cell membranes, into the cells of the clam. So if any of the laws which govern diffusion were to change appreciably, the clam's supply of oxygen would be either cut off or disturbed, and thus kill the clam (and other animals) in the sea. A similar balance exists for all animals. And of course the supply of oxygen is only one of hundreds of natural functions which are dependent upon the stable