

when it occurred? Is it not much better that we go ahead and admit the accuracy of man's evaluation of such natural events, rather than to stand off and say that knowledge is impossible without direct human observation of the event? Certainly it would appear that God intends for us to trust in our ability to make such evaluations, rather than to maintain an unwholesome attitude of skepticism, as some heathen philosophies do. It is true that one must guard against going on to make unreasonable claims as to just how hard it was raining when the lightning struck the tree; but let us not reject the basic facts just because some details are not determinable. Just so, man should not reject the validity of basic geologic processes and events of the past, merely because certain details are obscure.¹⁴

The Past Compared to the Present

The fact of God's intending that we place a reasonable amount of confidence in man's ability to observe and evaluate conditions in nature should apply to the study of the strata of the earth. Geologists have been carefully observing the processes by which strata and rocks are formed, for at least a century. During this time, data have been collected on many different types of rock-formation processes, and many microscopic and chemical similarities between recently formed rock layers and older layers have been observed. These men have consequently come to the logical conclusion that a high percentage of the sedimentary layers of the earth have been formed by approximately the same processes as we observe today.¹⁵ They also find some layers which were obviously deposited more rapidly than others. Occasionally the record of a catastrophic event, such as a landslide, earthquake, volcanic eruption, or rapid flooding is found.¹⁶ Such formations are readily distinguishable from the normal shallow-marine deposits and deep-sea sediments which are so abundant in the stratigraphic record. Thus we are recognizing both the slow and the rapid processes which have occurred in nature. Any uniformitarianism which would attribute all formations of the geologic record to slow processes is not acceptable. This fact is now recognized by practically all geologists.

When we recognize older rock layers as similar to those which we find being formed slowly today, we are of course assuming that conditions and processes on the earth were somewhat similar in the past to what they are now. We will have to admit that this type of assumption is reasonable when we realize that we can readily accept such processes as digestion and reproduction in mammals, and photosynthesis and water absorption in plants, as having remained the same ever since mammals and plants were created. Why then should the sediment and rock-forming actions of an aquatic environment not have been similar in early times to what they are now? The principle of the stability of God's natural laws, which we considered in Chapter 2, assures us that it is right that we accept these as essentially the same.

True, we allow for catastrophic events which have perhaps had a large part in forming mountains, lakes, and seas; but still, when