

even though the evidence for greater age is there, we should ignore its existence, and not try to demonstrate an agreement between the Bible and the observed conditions in the strata. Concerning the latter position, one must ask if it is ever right for a Bible student to ignore the strata merely because they contain information which would disturb his own preferred system of Bible interpretation. Does not such a policy make one guilty of refusing to examine a part of God's creation?

All three of the above alternatives are in use by Christians of various beliefs today. However, it certainly seems evident that our Christian testimony in the world can be best carried out by adopting the first of the three alternatives, as many of the evangelical leaders in the early part of this century did. In recognizing the deposits as a meaningful record of life in the past, these men found their faith and appreciation of God to be strengthened.¹⁹ Those of us who want to increase our appreciation for the majesty of God can surely do so by contemplating the larger displays of time which are found in the geologic record. To attempt to realize the magnitude of God's universe as it has existed through vast eons of time is to increase one's conception of God. In Psalm 102:25-27 we find the writer making use of his understanding of time in the past, to express God's greatness: "Of old Thou didst found the earth; And the heavens are the work of Thy hands. Even they will perish, but Thou dost endure...But Thou art the same, And Thy years will not come to an end." Many Christians have found it much more meaningful to contemplate the activities of God in his organized universe throughout a long past, than to think of his work as having been only recent. Some would consider the extent of this work of God to be only slightly over one hundred human life spans; but, to a lot of us, a really long time span of God's work is much more awesome.

Might it not be that God gave us the records of huge time spans in the past primarily as an object lesson of his immensity? It is common to hear Christians speak of the immense amounts of matter and space in the universe as a demonstration of God's greatness; why not then also recognize the unfathomable time spans as an expression of God's immensity? Space and time are certainly complements of each other in the realm of thought. We can never really comprehend the eternity and timelessness of God, but it is at least helpful to exercise one's mind to think back into the incomprehensible expanse of time in the universe; and then to realize that God was before all that.

Methods of Dating and the Bible

The Christian may ask, "Does not the Bible give us a method of exact dating for the earth and for the various phases of creation?" The answer is in the negative. It is true that the Bible gives us the general impression that God's works in the material universe go far back into time, but there is no suggestion of the precise limits. Certainly if God had wanted to tell us how long ago the various phases of his creation took place, He could have done so, but it appears that this is one of the mysteries which He chose not to reveal.