

than the moon, (h) liquid water can be evaporated into a gaseous form, and that same water recovered by condensation, (i) quartz is distinctly different from calcium carbonate rock, with regard to both hardness and chemical content, (j) both acidic and basic lavas are produced by volcanoes, and (k) the element lead is more dense than iron.

Is it not self-evident that these are enduring truths which will not change, even though our entire culture may be completely altered, and the time may come when human beings will no longer be performing experiments that demonstrate these principles, or writing scientific reports? Also we will have to recognize that even though I or some other person might make one or more accidental errors in our statements concerning these principles, this will not alter any basic, known truth that has been carefully observed and recorded in hundreds of scientific reports. Again, we need only to recognize that God has allowed man to search out and begin to know some of the truths concerning his creation, which were known to God from the beginning but not known to man until comparatively recent times.

The Stability of Natural Laws From God's Standpoint

We now deal briefly with the frequently-heard suggestion that scientific truth can be considered transient because of a possibility that God may sometimes change the controlling principles or natural laws that He originally established. This is a charge made by some extreme fundamentalists, but it need not worry anyone who is familiar with the biblical teaching on the nature and character of God.

First of all, we should accept the principle that natural laws, e. g., the laws of biological growth, are objectively real. The success of early modern science seems to have been based on the fact that Copernicus and other scientists of his era insisted that man can discover what is *actually true* in nature.³ Any theist who accepts the Bible as a revelation from God should have no trouble in accepting such an objectivity in the universe. In Hebrews 1:3 we read that God "upholds the universe by his word of power," and we observe all around us an order, regularity, and dependability of natural events that readily convinces us that God has "backed up" his creation with what we might call "regulations which work." Any denial of the cause-effect relationships involved in this is a denial of the validity of human observation, knowledge, and rationality.⁴ Such a denial is contrary to the statements of Christ referred to above, as well as to the teaching of Scripture with regard to man's possession of "the image of God."⁵

Concerning our confidence that God does not follow an erratic pattern of occasionally or periodically changing His natural laws, we should remember the many statements in divine revelation to the effect that God is immutable; for example, "I, the Lord, do not change" (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8; and Psalm 102:27).

We also find assurance that God has not changed the natural laws in the fact that life as described in the Garden of Eden and soon afterward was very similar to what it is

today. Plants were carrying out photosynthesis; animals were using plant materials as an energy source; reproduction was occurring according to genetic limits; and, after the expulsion, man found that hard work produced "sweat on (his) face." The Genesis account gives us no hint that life processes or the environment in which man lived was essentially different from what it is now. Furthermore, if the laws of biological growth and maintenance were all functioning properly then, we have no grounds for thinking either that God would change them later, or that He found it necessary to go through a process of developing or perfecting them in earlier times.

Conclusion: What To Do Now?

In view of the foregoing evidences for the enduring nature of scientific truth, we should:

1. Encourage both laymen and professional scientists and theologians to recognize (a) that God has created a consistent and understandable world, and (b) that even though man's comprehension of God's works has been dimmed by the Fall, God wants us to *know* and rejoice in truth discovered by scientific research.

2. Remember that holding to a view that scientific truth is only transient will render us powerless in the task of helping those who claim that scientific observations on the history of the earth are not dependable. (Many of the latter are accustomed to thinking that science can discover nothing at all about the past history of the earth, and that the Bible is the only source of reliable information on this subject.)

3. Refuse to pattern our own thinking after that exhibited by educators who fail to recognize God as the author of both creation and man's ability to know it.

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REFERENCES

¹It is true that many scientists, including some evangelicals, speak of man as "formulating the natural laws," but for the evangelical this can mean only that man puts into words a recognition of the law or relationship which was originally established by God (Holmes, *Christian Philosophy of Science*, p. 6). Such original laws are sometimes called "prescriptive laws," in contrast to "descriptive laws," which are man's formulations, made by synthesizing his observations of phenomena (from Russell Maatman, personal communication, 1980).

²Genesis 1:26-27.

³Genesis 3; Psalm 8:5; Psalm 82:6; John 10:34-35; Acts 17:28; Romans 1:19-20.

⁴Van Til, *A Survey of Christian Epistemology*, p. 4; Schaeffer, *He is There and He is Not Silent*, p. 43, 48-50, 65-72, 76-80.

⁵Thorson, "The Spiritual Dimensions of Science," p. 239-245, in *Horizons of Science*, p. 217-257; and Schaeffer, *He is There and He is Not Silent*, p. 67-69, 76.

⁶Maatman, *The Unity in Creation*, p. 50-66, 75-80.