

except that there is evidence of the action of water. This problem is soon solved by someone's suggestion of another hypothesis; namely, that the explosion of the bomb pushed the water away from the island, allowing it to return later with great force. The members of the party may then go and publicize their discovery of "an island destroyed by a hydrogen bomb." They might even go so far as to give or write lengthy explanations of the effects of heat, force, and water when hydrogen bombs are used.

What is wrong with this sort of observation and explanation? Perhaps several things are wrong, but the primary error was in the outright substituting of hypotheses for collected data. To be sure, the observers were collecting some data, but this data was not a group of factual observations systematically set aside to be analyzed at the end of the investigation. Thus the original hypothesis, supplemented by various lesser hypotheses, has taken the place of the data, and a false explanation has resulted. This erroneous method of investigation (with variations) has misled great numbers of the common (non-scientist) population ever since the dawn of written history, resulting in all sorts of superstitions and false beliefs. Both the non-Christian and Christian populations, including some Bible students, have frequently fallen into this snare. Sometimes the resulting error is a small one having to do with such matters as the supposed influence of the moon on growing crops; at other times it has had large effects upon people's beliefs concerning past events on the earth. Whatever the subject treated, the main reason that the observations have misled the people is that the observers have not systematically collected data as the basis for solving the problem. Instead, they have placed one or more hypotheses into a position of supremacy above the data. Needless to say, this is no proper way to obtain information from God's record in nature.

FOOTNOTES

1. R. B. Fisher, Science, Man, and Society, 1971, p. 4.
2. The expression "the data" is usually used in the plural sense, but sometimes is considered to be a single mass of collected information.
3. The expression "local stratigraphic column" refers to a series of strata which lie one above another, as observed (often by drilling) at a particular geographic location. This is in contrast to a composite column, which is constructed on paper by combining drilling records from various locations. See Chapter 4 for a description of such columns.
4. Oil corporations maintain extensive records of previous drilling operations, together with identified "cores" of some of the rock and sediments which have been removed from the wells. Cores are obtained by special drill bits which lift out sections of the well.