

other clam shells of this type which did have living clams in them, so we can accept the validity of the empty shell we find on the beach. (Of course our observations in this case would need to include microscopic or chemical examination to verify the shell's composition.) To say that this empty shell may have been formed by some other way is to distrust the natural laws and processes which God created.

Another illustration of this principle can be considered. We know that a redwood tree forms one double growth layer (ring) of its trunk each year, except in years of very abnormal weather when this may vary slightly. We realize that this is a natural law which we can trust, and do not assume that before the time of Columbus' discovery of America this was different. We have studied the growth habits of this and other trees, and know that we can rely on the consistency of the natural processes, even though no one was watching the trees grow during the Middle Ages. To say that they may have formed 30 or 50 rings per year during that time would be to disregard the divinely established consistency of nature.

A slightly different example of our legitimately accepting a precise explanation for an unobserved event is the following: If lightning strikes a tree in a lonely forest when no one is there to observe, it will nevertheless leave the marks of the event (unless the area is set ablaze by the lightning). A trained forester coming upon the tree somewhat later can easily recognize what has happened, and describe it thusly: "A relatively small bolt of lightning has recently hit one of the upper branches of the tree, following down the north side of the trunk, leaving a streak of peeled bark as it passed down to the ground. At the edge of the peeled bark one can observe the characteristic splintering effect of the lightning as it passed along the tree trunk. A shallow hole one foot in diameter was left at the base of the tree where the lightning made contact with the earth."¹³ The forester knows that it was a small bolt of lightning, because it has only peeled the bark and produced splinters in a narrow path; large bolts split a tree into many pieces. He also knows that the event took place recently, because the exposed wood is not appreciably discolored or covered with fungus growth. (Or he could fairly accurately date an older event by the amount and type of fungal growth on the decaying wood.)

It would be possible to doubt the judgment of the forester in such a case, and say that some other unknown combination of forces had produced all the likely signs of a bolt of lightning. However, if we call in several foresters, each of whom has examined numerous known cases of lightning striking trees, and find that they agree that the damage was produced by lightning, we can be safe in accepting their judgment. The reason we can be safe in this is that the rational God has created a rational world, and has given man some of His own rationality for interpreting the creation.

Is it not thus true that God has endowed man with the necessary intelligence to evaluate many natural events properly and correctly without the benefit of direct observation of the event at the time